

Aston Clinton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110332
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337471
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Beryl Richmond

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Tomkins
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Shepherd
Date of previous school inspection	3 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, some members of staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence, including systems for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress, the work that pupils had produced in their books, the quality of teachers' marking and the questionnaires completed by 117 parents. Analysis was made of the school's development plans and safeguarding information was scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following areas:

- pupils' attainment and progress throughout the school and how well teaching contributes to their learning, especially that of girls
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels in raising achievement and standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of the school in bringing about improvements in the curriculum so that it is motivating and meaningful for pupils and
- the effectiveness of assessment to support learning and drive improvement.

Information about the school

Aston Clinton is a large village primary school. Most pupils live locally or in the surrounding villages and are of White British heritage. There are very few pupils who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities is in line with the national average. Their needs are mainly moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils with statements of educational need is above average. A ten-place Language Department caters for pupils with severe language impairment. These pupils are fully integrated into school life attending most lessons with their peers, but also receiving language support on an individual or small group basis. Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage children is in two Reception classes, which operate as a unit. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are grouped into three mixed-age classes, as are pupils in Years 3 and 4. In Years 5 and 6, there are two discrete classes for each year group. There have been a number of changes in staffing and leadership and management over recent years.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Aston Clinton is a good and improving school. Pupils achieve well throughout the school in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and in many aspects of their personal development. In particular, they gain an outstanding understanding about how to adopt healthy lifestyles and are very well cared for overall.

Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and throughout the school so that by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. From pupils' starting point this represents good progress. Previous differences in boys' and girls' achievement are no longer evident because of effective action to ensure that girls participate as fully as boys in mathematics and science lessons. Higher expectations about what younger pupils can achieve by the end of Year 2 have led to above average standards in reading and mathematics. Writing standards have improved but remain broadly average. Prompt action is being taken to help more pupils to reach higher level (Level 3) in writing by the end of Year 2. So far, to remedy this, teachers and leaders are ensuring that pupils write for a wider range of purposes, have more opportunities to write at length and to edit and revise their work.

The school's good performance is because there is a strong work ethic and most pupils develop into caring and thoughtful individuals who have well developed social skills. Pupils play a full part in school life. Leaders recognise that pupils need more opportunities to work independently and to develop their own lines of enquiry including using computers more often. Although a few pupils and parents disagree, inspection evidence is that most pupils behave well and the school has effective systems in place to promote this. Pupils' social awareness extends beyond the school and is evident, for example, in a wide range of charity fundraising and participation in local events.

Underpinning pupils' good progress is consistently good teaching and learning, which have been brought about by effective monitoring and support given to teachers especially by the headteacher. The impact of good teaching is further enhanced by good assessment and the setting of targets for pupils to achieve. Effective systems for tracking each pupil's progress, in English, mathematics and science ensures that good quality help is provided for any pupil who is falling behind. The school knows its strengths and areas for improvement well. The constant pursuit of improvement has been driven strongly by the exceptional leadership of the headteacher who forms a strong partnership with the deputy headteacher. Other senior leaders, staff and governors are working well together. The school has the capacity to sustain the good rate of improvement evident since its last inspection.

Recent improvements to the curriculum make it more meaningful to pupils and this

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helps them to enjoy learning. They are motivated to learn and like the links that teachers make between subjects. Each topic includes a 'wow' event such as a visit. The well thought out curriculum has led to pupils attaining above average standards. The revised curriculum builds on this secure base to give pupils more opportunities to apply their basic skills. Much work has been done to improve provision in information and communication technology but pupils are not able to use computers enough on a daily basis.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the proportion of pupils attaining level three in writing by the end of Year 2 to at least the national average, by giving pupils opportunities to write for a wider range of purposes, to write at length and to revise and edit their work.
- Enable pupils to develop skills of independence and follow their own lines of enquiry including using information and communication technology on a more regular basis.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Inspectors took a particular interest in the progress and learning of girls because some national test results in recent years indicated that girls did not progress as well as boys in mathematics and science. The school had already identified this issue from monitoring and put in place strategies like 'no hands up'. This means that the teacher chooses who answers any question posed giving equal opportunities to all pupils. Current data is not showing the previous differences in performance.

By the end of Year 2, standards have been above average except in writing over the last three years. Writing is an area for improvement in the drive to lift achievement in this aspect of learning from satisfactory to good.

Until the last few years, standards on entry to Year 3 had been average and the current and recent Year 6 pupils show good progress from this starting point. Pupils achieve well because of highly effective tracking systems, which teachers use to check on the performance of individuals, groups and classes. This information is used regularly to predict the likely performance of each pupil. This is an important tool, especially for pupils in the mixed-age classes. The school can pinpoint any underperformance so that extra challenge or support can be provided. Pupils in the language department make good progress because of high quality support in class and in specialist groups. For example, pupils learn well because of a focus on meaningful dialogue and carefully chosen texts like one on 'Superman', meant that a boy really engaged with reading and made good progress.

The impact of the school's outstanding support, guidance and care is evident in the pupils' good spiritual, moral, and social development. Inspectors were impressed by most pupils' high standards of behaviour and social skills. The school's

involvement in a wide range of community activities such as the local flower show, art and music festivals enable pupils to develop their personal skills well.

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Pupils' knowledge of how to keep safe is good. There are exceptional outcomes in terms of pupils making healthy choices in the food they eat, drinking plenty of water and the widespread participation in physical activities. Staff and pupils monitor closely pupils' participation in physical activity. The school provides excellent opportunities that interest more reluctant participants, for example, street dancing. The 'Bike It' initiative has reduced the proportion of pupils travelling to school by car by 15 per cent, an excellent range of clubs support healthy living, including cookery and gardening, and playtimes offer a whole range of other opportunities to be active. Pupils are given a good grounding in citizenship and in contributing to the community through, for example, appointments as house captains. The school council has been proactive in producing a leaflet on bullying and in asking the school to provide a friendship bench, both of which are appreciated by pupils. On a day-to-day basis from the youngest children upwards, all are involved in helping the school run smoothly. Pupils are aware of other lifestyles through, for instance, links with India and topics on the Rainforest. They are developing their understanding of the different religions and cultures of other British people, through, for example, their links with other schools and a visit to a mosque. Opportunities to participate in mini enterprise help pupils to develop some of the skills that will help them lead successful adult lives.

Most pupils attend school regularly and usually attendance is above average. Where it has been slightly lower in recent times, the main causes were long-term illnesses and widespread sickness bugs.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good throughout the school. Lessons are well planned although there is no common format for lesson planning. Teachers have good skills in managing pupils and relationships are good. This means that pupils usually learn in calm, productive classrooms. Teachers provide clear explanations and make explicit what pupils are to learn in all lessons. Because pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their work, learning proceeds at a good pace. On occasions, opportunities for pupils to learn independently and follow their own lines of enquiry are missed. For example, this occurs when all pupils participate in the introduction to a mathematics lesson, when more able pupils are capable of working in a more investigative independent way sooner. Because pupils have good reading and comprehension skills, this means that written instructions are quickly understood. Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboard technology to provide visual support and interest in lessons. For example, the use of a video on deforestation in the Rain Forest brought the subject alive for pupils in Year 5. Teachers are good at explaining new ideas and pupils say that teachers provide good feedback through individual support when they have difficulty understanding new things. Pupils are clear about their targets and find them useful in knowing how to improve. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly, using the three stars and a wish system, and provide helpful comments to point their pupils towards the next steps in their learning.

The newly implemented curriculum is good. It is carefully monitored and as a result, activities have become more interesting to pupils. For example, younger pupils enjoyed the opportunity to use drama to re-enact the story of Jake and Bones. This is supporting their learning and is aiding whole school improvement. In the core subjects it is effective in helping to promote above average standards, except in writing at the end of Year 2. Gifted and talented mathematicians enjoy the opportunity to work with the local grammar school to extend their thinking in mathematics. Music is a strength of the curriculum leading to pupils singing tunefully with enjoyment and enthusiasm and many pupils are learning to play musical instruments. Some pupils had the special opportunity to sing at the Albert Hall recently.

A wide range of agencies are involved in helping the school to provide excellent care, guidance and support. This includes two part-time speech therapists who work in school on regular basis. Teaching assistants are well trained and play an important role in supporting pupils' learning and emotional needs. Attendance is monitored rigorously and any absence is followed up very promptly.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The driving force behind the school's success is the outstanding leadership provided by the headteacher, who gives first-rate direction for the work of the school. She has ensured that significant progress has been made in improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils make better progress and standards have risen. At the same time the strengths in the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school are very high due to high expectations. Improvements have been possible because of the rigorous monitoring of provision and analysis of data about pupils' progress. The more recently appointed deputy headteacher is fully involved in this process together with other members of the senior leadership team. The school has been focussing well on developing all leaders' skills and expertise so that the whole team is involved in the self-evaluation process; middle managers are developing their roles in relation to this.

The governors make good use of their wide-ranging professional skills when closely monitoring the school's effectiveness and holding senior leaders to account. Good attention is paid by managers at all levels to ensure the best quality of safety and care for the pupils. Rigorous procedures are in place for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through making checks on adults who work as staff or volunteers in the school. There is effective promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils in most aspects of the school's work. The school often goes the extra mile to ensure that a pupil with a specific difficulty can participate in all aspects of school life.

The school has good partnerships with a range of agencies and other organisations and schools to promote pupils' well-being and learning. For example, links have been established with a local National Trust property to develop their curriculum by trialling ideas with Aston Clinton pupils.

There is a strong commitment to promoting community cohesion within and outside the school community. The school knows its own community very well. Links have been established particularly with schools in India and High Wycombe. The school has widespread links with many schools and organisations through the many activities that the pupils participate in.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Reception Year children make good progress from starting points that are broadly in line with those expected for their age except in aspects of their language and mathematical development, which are slightly lower. It is in these aspects that their progress is particularly good because the school has introduced a new approach to teaching letters and sounds and given children more opportunities for solving mathematical problems and writing.

Children benefit from very large well-resourced connected classrooms and a good outdoor area, which is partly covered and has shady areas. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are good, with some outstanding features. Staff are skilled in providing a wide range of high-quality activities that challenge the children to make choices and to investigate, and are highly adept at picking up on and developing spontaneous learning opportunities. Consequently children are developing their skills of independence well even early in the school year. This is because they are very well settled and routines have been well established. Parents recognise that the school makes every effort to enable their children to settle happily. Parents' and children's visits to the school before children start mean that they know the staff and are familiar with the classrooms. They are able to dress up in school uniform as part of their role play activities at pre-school, which helps them to begin to understand what school life will be like.

The school works flexibly well so that some Year 1 pupils who need extra time in the Reception class have opportunities to work there for some time during the week, particularly on consolidating their knowledge of letters and sounds.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work as a team and have a strong commitment to further improvement. Planning takes account of all children's needs and

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ongoing and planned assessments contribute well to each child's progress.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Overall, a large majority of parents who completed the questionnaires are satisfied with the school. The proportion of questionnaires returned was better than is found in most schools. A very high proportion of positive responses were reported in terms of pupils' enjoyment, their safety, the quality of teaching, the help their child receives to have a healthy lifestyle, the quality of leadership and management and the overall experience of their child at the school. A few parents were not happy with their child's progress and aspects of the way that the school communicates with them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Aston Clinton School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 117 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 287 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	63	54	49	42	5	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	65	56	49	42	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	32	27	71	61	10	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	32	62	53	11	9	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	32	68	58	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	33	62	53	11	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	38	67	57	3	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	35	30	63	54	6	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	38	32	65	56	9	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	25	71	61	5	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	19	83	71	4	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	56	48	53	45	4	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	54	46	57	49	4	3	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



1 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Aston Clinton School, Aylesbury, HP22 5JJ

Thank you for helping the inspection team when we came to inspect your school recently to find out how well you are getting on. We particularly enjoyed visiting your lessons and talking to some of you.

We agree with your parents' and the school's judgement that your school is good. There are many good things about your school. I cannot mention everything, so here is a list of some important points.

- You make good progress in your work, and when you leave school at the end of Year 6 you are well prepared for your future lives.
- Most of you behave well and get on together.
- You told us how much you enjoy your work and appreciate your teachers. They are good at helping you learn well in lessons, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. Your participation in physical activities is exceptional.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are very well looked after.
- Your headteacher has brought about some important improvements to your school. All the adults are working well together.

The staff and governors of your school want your school to be even better. To help them to do this, we would like them to do the following things.

- Make sure that pupils who find learning easy in Year 2 get to really high levels in their writing.
- Make sure that you have more opportunities to work on your own and do your own investigations, including using computers more often to do this.

I would like to send you my very best wishes for your future success in whatever you choose to do.

Yours faithfully,

Beryl Richmond

Lead Inspector

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