

Alvanley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111003
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337609
Inspection dates	2–3 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Donald Currie
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Walker
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 7 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and parents. They observed the school's work and looked at school policies, national assessment data, the school's own assessments and samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at 25 questionnaires returned by parents as well as those from pupils and staff members.

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

- the progress made by pupils individually, and the standards they reach
- whether teaching and the curriculum have improved since the last inspection
- the impact which leaders and managers have on school improvement.

Information about the school

This very small school serves a rural community. The school is part of a federated partnership, formed in 2006, with a nearby village school of similar size. The headteacher leads both schools. All of the pupils at Alvanley are of White British heritage. A higher than average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. A very small number are known to be eligible for free schools meals. Pupils enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception class. Among the school's awards are the Activemark and the Inclusion Quality Mark.

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

Alvanley School nurtures its pupils in a warm, family environment and helps them to achieve well. Exceptional and visionary leadership from the headteacher, the strong governing body and well-motivated staff team have combined to bring about good improvements in many aspects of the school's work since the last inspection. Standards are rising due to rigorous checking of every child's individual progress. Teaching is stronger and exciting approaches to curriculum planning promote good learning and a large measure of enjoyment for pupils. Over the past two years the school has amply proven its good capacity to improve.

The small number of children entering the Reception class varies from year to year, as do their abilities. Generally they are below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy skills, and some aspects of their personal, social and emotional development. They progress well and work confidently within their expected targets by the end of Reception. Consistently good teaching ensures that good progress continues. The school has worked hard to raise standards and exceeded all of its Year 6 targets for English in 2009. Standards in mathematics and science have improved. Although pupils reach average levels in those subjects, they do not yet match the above average picture seen in English. This was achieved by very effective promotion of pupils' writing skills across the whole curriculum. School leaders have identified the relative weaknesses in mathematics and science as a main target for improvement. The school is highly regarded by parents for the provision it makes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Justification for this is seen in the excellent quality of care and support these pupils receive and their resulting good progress.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their personal qualities of behaviour, the pride that they show for their school and the way they contribute to its life are outstanding. Examples are the way the school council has negotiated huge improvements in playground facilities and brought about action from the local council on road safety issues outside the school.

Leaders and managers are acutely aware of the varying needs of all pupils in the school. They have improved their skills at assessing and measuring progress. They effectively plan for the challenge and individual support that has boosted pupils' achievement. Strengths have been drawn from the federated partnership so that innovative curriculum planning has lifted both teachers' and pupils' expectations. The school is more reflective about the impact of its work as a result, and self-evaluation is both robust and accurate.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards further in mathematics and science by building on the success of initiatives in writing and enabling pupils to apply investigation skills to a wider range of subjects.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They say they enjoy their lessons because they 'do things all of the time'. As an example, a group described how much they enjoyed constructing fairground rides using electric motors to drive them. Pupils are attentive and well behaved in lessons and sensibly adapt to ways of working individually or with partners. Their good levels of confidence and independence are fostered well from Reception class onwards. Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities they have to work creatively and are very excited about the chances to show their artistic talents in the forthcoming production of Alice in Wonderland .

Pupils' good progress stems from their enthusiasm for school. Their responses in questionnaires are entirely positive and pupils typically comment on how much help they receive. The school's thorough year-by-year analysis of individual performance clearly shows good progress in relation to pupils' varying starting points. When measured against national expectations, attainment for Year 6 pupils has improved significantly to reach at least average levels overall with a much stronger performance in English. Standards for pupils at the end of Year 2 also show good improvement. Most pupils made good progress to reach, and some to exceed, expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. Very small cohorts make comparisons with national data statistically uncertain when measuring progress. Inspection evidence, including an evaluation of pupils' current work, indicates that continued improvement is likely. Leaders are not complacent and their current focus is on getting more pupils to achieve higher levels in mathematics and science.

Pupils have great affection for their school. They attend regularly and say they feel very safe. They share trusting relationships with adults and with each other and hold firm views about the unpleasantness of bullying and racism. Pupils are always well mannered, polite and very mindful of others. They fully understand the benefits of eating sensibly and taking regular exercise. Pupils contribute especially well to the life of the school through, for example, school council activities and by taking on responsibilities that help to give the school a role in village life. Pupils from the school organised and ran their own stall at their Christmas Fayre that was very well attended by all sections of the community. Their good development in social awareness and their increasing achievements in basic skills, leaves them well-placed to become active and responsible members of a community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
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?

The quality of teaching is good and accounts for pupils' good progress. Excellent care and support shows pupils how much they are valued and underpins their willingness to work hard. Lessons are prepared well, with always enough challenge for all ages and abilities in the class. Teachers use assessment effectively to set targets for pupils, and good marking guides them effectively towards further improvement. Subject knowledge is good and pupils are questioned well in order to assess their learning and extend their thinking. Electronic whiteboards and other resources are used effectively to focus pupils' attention and keep them on their toes. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the '100 square' displayed on the whiteboard helped pupils to see and understand number patterns when adding and subtracting 10. They used this understanding to good effect later in the lesson when their skills were extended to solving problems such as 32+12 by adding 10, then 2. Pupils have good access to computers in the classrooms.

The school reaches out, through its rich curriculum, to meet the needs of all pupils well and enables their good achievement across many areas. It provides well for their personal social and emotional growth and enables pupils to make informed decisions about their own safety and well-being. Capitalising on pupils' first-hand experiences to promote writing skills across the curriculum has been particularly successful. A similar cross-curricular approach to improve mathematics and science is now needed. The range and quality of experiences provided to enrich pupils' learning and broaden their

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

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horizons is an outstanding feature of provision. Pupils eagerly attend the wide range of after-school clubs. In conjunction with its partner school and members of the local community, Alvanley is planning an exciting multi-arts project which is to include a residential experience, work with artists and musicians and to culminate in a dramatic performance.

The quality of pastoral care, support and guidance is outstanding. Parents fully recognise and appreciate the way in which staff members go 'the extra mile' to provide exceptional, and sensitive, care for the most vulnerable pupils in the school. Highly effective liaison with relevant agencies ensures that the pupils, whatever their needs, have the best possible support. The school works very hard to include all parents and carers and provides workshops for them to show how children's learning can be supported at home. Parents comment that staff members are always approachable and unanimously agree that their children are very well cared for.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	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 headteacher's determination and driving ambition for the school have been major factors in school improvement since the last inspection. With the very able support of the assistant headteacher she has raised the aspirations of staff through effective professional development and embedded a strong sense of unity and commitment. Inclusion is the heart of the school. Discrimination is challenged vigorously at all levels and every effort is made by school leaders to provide pupils and staff members with the opportunities they need. Governors support and challenge the school in equal measure. They know the school's strengths and monitor its progress rigorously to ensure continued success. The school manages statutory responsibilities efficiently and safeguarding procedures are robust. The school promotes community well. The school has evaluated current practice and set out clear plans to build on the work already done. Links with the local community are very good. First steps have been taken towards establishing a working link with an Islamic faith school. A 'Go Global' workshop in school where pupils sampled life in an African village provides a good platform for further exploration of communities worldwide. Pupils benefit very well from Alvanley's excellent work with partner schools and colleges. Arts and sports opportunities, including challenging experiences for more able and gifted pupils, are a strong feature of these partnerships. First class transitional arrangements mean that pupils enter smoothly into

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high school life.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
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

Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage results in strong provision and children's good progress from starting points that are below those typically seen for their age. On entering Year 1, small numbers of children are usually working within the early learning goals and some are more advanced. Those who need more time to consolidate skills in Year 1 do so effectively because provision for their continued learning through exploration and play is planned well. The sharing of a classroom with Key Stage 1 pupils benefits children well. They gain in confidence and their ability to make choices and to work independently particularly in creative activities. There is a good balance of activities led by adults and those which children choose for themselves. Daily sessions on letters and sounds are taught well so children quickly gain the confidence to tackle simple reading and writing skills. The outside area is used effectively, in all weathers, to nurture good physical development and enable children to build on their learning in the classroom. In the playhouse, for example, children enjoying role-play had set out the right number of plates with equal amounts of food on them for their teddy bears' picnic. Provision for children's welfare is good. All staff members are watchful over the children's physical and emotional well-being and all contribute to the evaluation of their progress and the planning of next steps in their learning and development. Links with parents are very good and they too have opportunities to contribute to their children's assessments.

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

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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

Parents returned 25 questionnaires. The vast majority were very supportive of the school. Comments typically highlighted the caring nature of the school and how well children are helped to make progress. A very small number of parents asked for clarification about homework. Inspection evidence does not support the views of an equally small number who feel that aspects of the school's provision hampers progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alvanley Primary 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 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 64 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	11	44	14	56	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	52	11	44	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	7	28	16	64	1	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	5	20	19	76	1	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	24	18	72	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	8	32	14	56	3	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	32	16	64	0	0	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)	6	24	16	64	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	7	28	17	68	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	7	28	15	60	1	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	40	14	56	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	9	36	15	60	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	8	32	17	68	0	0	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.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alvanley Primary School, Frodsham, WA6 9DD

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed our time in the lovely atmosphere of your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you because you are exceptionally polite and well mannered. We also noticed how regularly you attend school. No doubt this is because you enjoy being there so much and the school dinners are smashing too! It was also very pleasing to see how extremely well-cared for you are by the grown-ups, and how well you take care of each other.

Alvanley is a good school. You all enjoy your lessons, work hard and make good progress. The standards you reach in English are higher than average. Your headteacher and teachers work hard too and I agree with you when you say they make your lessons fun. You showed that clearly when you shared all of that lovely work during your assembly. I was very impressed with the video of the Alvanley morning news bulletin.

Your parents, teachers and governors like your school as much as you do and want it to continue to improve. In order to help that along I have asked teachers and governors to help you to reach the same standards in mathematics and science as you do in English. They can do that by giving you more chances to use what you know about these subjects in lots of different ways, in other different subjects. You can help by continuing to enjoy learning as much as you do, and to go on being well-mannered, regular attenders at school.

Good luck to all of you and best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead inspector

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