

Age group	7-11
Inspection date(s)	14-15 September 2009
Inspection number	338434

Alton Park Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114721
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338434
Inspection dates	14-15 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	413
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	D Bolton
Headteacher	Tony Coppin
Date of previous school inspection	14-15 May 2007
School address	Alton Park Road, Clacton-on-Sea Essex CO15 1DL
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils and the school's educational welfare officer. They observed the school's work and looked at pupils' work, a range of school documentation and policies, monitoring records and data on pupils' achievement. Inspectors received and read 123 parental questionnaires.

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

- attendance
- boys' attitudes to learning
- strategies for managing behaviour
- pupils' involvement in assessing their own progress.

Information about the school

Alton Park is larger than average. Most pupils live nearby. Pupil mobility is high across the school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with six percent from a range of minority ethnic groups. There is a much higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of educational need. The school has an award for Healthy Schools and holds the Football Association Charter Standard. The headteacher took up post in April 2009.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Alton Park Junior is a satisfactory school. It has several noteworthy features, in particular pupils' good academic achievement, while outcomes in pupils' personal development are mostly satisfactory. The learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is outstanding due to the skilled support, teaching and individualised attention received by these pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are clearly identified and supported well. Pastoral care is good, including support for vulnerable and needy pupils and children who are looked after by the local authority. Attainment at Year 6 is broadly average, with most pupils across the school making good progress from often low starting points. Pupils do particularly well in science, where attainment is above average. Parents are largely pleased with the school, and typically say 'we are very happy with our child's progress'. The recently appointed headteacher is visible around the school, always with time to talk to pupils, enriching their sense of well-being and confidence. One pupil, echoing the views of others and of parents, said 'I would like to tell the inspectors that all the teachers in the school are great!'. They are right - teaching is good and all staff work hard to do their best for their pupils.

Most pupils like school and behave well. In particular, pupils really enjoy the varied curriculum, especially music, as seen in their outstanding recorder playing. Sporting activities are well linked to pupils' impressive understanding of how to stay healthy. Information and communication technology is used well across the curriculum and there are adequate opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills within a range of subjects. There are a few boys, however, who are reluctant to knuckle down to learning or who occasionally have difficulty managing their behaviour when not directly supervised during lessons. Consequently, progress is sometimes slowed for these pupils, as it is for a handful with poor attendance. In most cases, behaviour is managed well, but good practice is not yet fully consistent. New strategies have been introduced this term to improve behaviour, but these have yet to have a full impact. Similarly, innovative strategies and initiatives to work more closely with hard to reach parents and carers in order to lift attendance beyond its present low level are too new to have made a difference. The new assessment system is developing well, but staff are not yet fully confident and consistent in its use for pupils to be sure how to assess their own work and progress.

Capacity to improve is satisfactory. The new headteacher is getting to grips with his role, aided considerably by experienced senior leaders and good middle management teams. Governance fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is now seeking to ensure

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that it challenges the school more robustly about its work. Teamwork at all levels is well-embedded with positive impact on the schools' work. The leadership team has a secure balance of skills and ideas to drive the school on. Safeguarding is satisfactory. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the interest of boys in their learning through
 - clear, whole school strategies for managing behaviour and promoting positive attitudes, so that there is a measurable, sustained impact on their attainment and achievement.
- Raise attendance rates by
 - working closely with hard to reach parents and carers
 - using innovative and/or individualised strategies to secure and maintain effective improvement.
- Involve pupils in assessing their own progress towards challenging targets, by
 - developing staff confidence and consistency in using the new assessment strategies.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

While pupils' academic achievement is good, other important outcomes – such as behaviour – are mostly not as strong. The very large majority of pupils enjoy their lessons and attend well. For example, they proudly use interactive whiteboards, talking through their chosen method of problem solving in a mathematics lesson, or correcting teachers' deliberate mistakes in English comprehension. These positive attitudes ensure good progress, and such that the trend in attainment has been broadly average in English and mathematics at Year 6 over recent years, from often low attainment on entry. Standards in science are above average. While test results dipped last term, they reflected the late arrival of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Throughout the school this particular group of pupils progress extremely well.

Slower progress by a few pupils and boys in particular, relates to the impact of limited motivation, poor attendance and occasional challenging behaviour, which the school is seeking to tackle more rigorously. Nonetheless, pupils mostly relate well and offer each other help and support. Pupils say they feel safe and, although a few are troubled by bullying, they feel confident that they can ask for help. Most pupils treat each other with respect and behave well in class. Exclusion involves very few pupils.

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Pupils enjoy and do exceptionally well in sports, being runners up in the national school rounders championships. In addition, they grow vegetables and fruit to take home. Community involvement is good and pupils regularly fundraise. The school council provides pupils with a clear voice to express their ideas about making their school even better, and the choir has performed at the Albert Hall. Identified gifted and talented pupils, including some from ethnic minority groups, excel in a range of areas. Pupils learn financial acumen through fundraising and entrepreneurial activities. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory, and the school is now working to broaden pupils' view of British culture and in gaining experience of other cultures and beliefs.

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	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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is epitomised in good staff teamwork, secure subject knowledge and skilful questioning and explanations. Outstanding practice was seen in teaching some of the most challenging pupils, aided by promptly pre-empting any unacceptable behaviour or actions, although this approach is not always adopted in all classes. The curriculum provides pupils with wide-ranging practical and academic activities, and is particularly well adapted to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented. New initiatives have secured improvements to the curriculum for English and mathematics. Work to develop reading skills has proved particularly successful, as a result of focussed sessions. Many clubs, visits and visitors enrich pupils' experiences and enjoyment.

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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Music is a particular strength, including wonderful singing, as are opportunities for sport, whilst science continues to excel. The use of assessment is developing. In some lessons objectives are clearly reinforced and this ensures that pupils are clear about what they are to learn, but this is not always the case. Although there are class and group targets, individual challenging targets that build on prior learning are limited so that pupils are unsure how to assess their own progress independently.

Staff know their pupils' well. They use this knowledge to build self-esteem and work to improve social skills so that pupils become better learners. The school is now working to improve attendance by not authorising term time holidays and taking robust action where necessary. There is a well supervised lunchtime club for those pupils who find playtimes difficult. There is good access to most external agencies to support individual needs for vulnerable pupils.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The new headteacher is steadily growing into his leadership role, working closely with the management team to improve on pupils' already good academic progress. Parents appreciate the headteacher's focus on caring for their children and he has already overseen the introduction of key initiatives to ensure that all pupils have every opportunity to achieve well. A new behaviour scheme, for example, and training for staff to support the drive to raise attainment and achievement further are set to take off this term. Senior leaders are forward thinking, ambitious and keen to involve staff more in planning for improvement. Staff monitoring and subject review by the subject leaders is good, clearly identifying strengths and areas for development through good quality action plan.

Priorities are clearly understood and accurate. One of these is the further development of the governing body. Governors provide satisfactory support and fulfil their statutory responsibilities. However, they do not yet challenge the school as robustly as they should about its effectiveness. Safeguarding procedures, policies and practice are satisfactory and meet current government requirements. Partnerships with local schools, multi-agency support and provision of external funding for the schools' gifted and talented programme is good and has a positive impact on pupils' outcomes. The school is starting to reach out to parents, but still has some way to go to fully involve parents who may be more reluctant participants

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in their children's learning. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory, with racial harmony appropriately promoted, fewer exclusions and intervention groups for those pupils needing learning or emotional support. Community cohesion is satisfactory, especially in terms of the school and local area, with well-established links with partner schools broadening pupils' learning opportunities. The school has established a link with a primary school in Ghana, and is keen to extend its work in this area. Financial resources are secure and deployment of resources offers satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents are satisfied with the work of the school. Most parents feel that their children are happy, safe and well cared for, and that their children are making good progress. A few parents would appreciate more information about their children's progress and learning, and help in supporting their work. Most think teaching is good, that their children are enabled to be healthy and are well prepared for the future, although a few parents think that behaviour could be better. A few parents want more notice taken of their comments and suggestions. Inspectors agree with parents' views. In addition, there was evidence that the schools' partnership with parents is positive.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alton Park Junior 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 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 413 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	45	51	51	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	50	50	46	46	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	39	39	49	49	6	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	40	50	50	6	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	46	47	47	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	39	52	52	5	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	38	38	51	51	4	4	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)	42	42	48	48	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	44	47	47	3	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	43	43	42	42	6	6	4	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	29	55	55	6	6	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	40	52	52	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	46	46	46	2	2	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 all 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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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

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 pupils' 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.



16 September 2009

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Alton Junior School, Clacton-on-Sea, CO15 1DL

We want to thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. You told us a lot about what you like doing, especially using the interactive whiteboards in lessons, competitive sport and music-making. You sang beautifully in assembly and we enjoyed listening to you. It is clear that you like your school.

You make good progress from your starting points because your teachers are good at helping you to learn. Your school as whole, however, is satisfactory. This is because some areas of your personal development are not so well developed as your achievements in your work. The school is working hard to make them better, but some of its initiatives are new and are not yet having a full impact. However, we were very impressed by your enthusiasm for adopting healthy lifestyles.

There are three areas where the school needs your help to get even better. The first is to make sure that you are all really interested in learning and always behave well. The second is to improve attendance by working more closely with those of you who do not come to school as much as you should, and with your parents. Lastly, to involve all of you more in understanding how well you are doing.

We are sure that you will enjoy working with your teachers to achieve these goals.

Yours faithfully,

Judi Bedawi
Lead Inspector

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