

The Alderton Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114864
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338471
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Denise Morris

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	175
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	C Wort
Headteacher	S Dalby
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. During the inspection, 10 lessons were observed and six teachers were seen. Inspectors held meetings with teachers, parents, leaders, governors, the extended school's coordinator, a specialist teacher and the educational psychologist who works with the school. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at pupils' books, the school development plan, teachers' plans, curriculum documents and assessment information. They analysed inspection questionnaires returned by many staff and by 68 parents.

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

- how the more able pupils are helped to achieve their potential
- how the curriculum meets the needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- the effectiveness of leadership and management in improving standards for pupils.

Information about the school

This is an average sized infant school. Most pupils are White British with a few from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school shares a site with the junior school, a children's centre and a private nursery. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate or specific learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties, is above average.

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

This is a good school. It has the overwhelming support of parents, who rightly say that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps them safe. 'Staff are very vigilant, the school is calm, well managed, and is a happy and stimulating place for my child' wrote one parent. Pupils have positive attitudes and behave well because the school is effective in promoting their personal development and well-being. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They say that they enjoy school although a few do not come to school as regularly as they could. As a result, attendance is broadly average.

Achievement is good. Children get off to a positive start in the Reception classes. Their starting points on entry are generally below the level expected for their age. Many have particularly weak skills in communication, language and literacy and mathematical development. Children achieve well but do not regularly have enough opportunities to make choices and initiate their own learning. By Year 2, attainment is broadly average. Pupils' good progress is a result of high levels of attention and support and the way that the school works well with a wide range of external specialists who cater for individual behavioural, personal and learning needs. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for example, achieve well, making good gains towards achieving their targets. Those who are more able sometimes make similar progress to their peers but they do not always reach their full potential because too few challenges are set for them. Overall, good teaching and good quality care, guidance and support result in strong relationships and well-managed, harmonious lessons.

The school curriculum is outstanding. It is vibrant and promotes some extensive opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness through excellent art and music experiences. Work with local artists and specialist teaching in these subjects is having a very positive impact on pupils' achievements. Realistic models of owls and squirrels, for example, created by pupils with a visiting potter, as well as work in the style of other artists, enhance the school environment significantly.

Good leadership and management has embedded improvements and driven the school forward since the last inspection. Improvements to the provision and extensions to the curriculum are having a very positive impact on pupils' enjoyment and learning.

Partnerships are strong, underpinning much of the schools' work and ensuring good local links particularly with sports partners and other schools. Accurate self-evaluation has enabled leaders to identify what needs improving and all staff are fully involved in leading and reviewing change. Training for staff is regular and effective. Governors support the school well and regularly challenge and hold the school to account for its decisions. This supports the good capacity to improve further.

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

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement for more-able pupils, including those who are gifted or talented, by ensuring that teachers provide regular tasks to extend their skills.
- Improve opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make more decisions about their own learning.
- Work closely with parents, pupils and support agencies to ensure that all pupils come to school regularly.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well and, as a result, they attain at least average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. In a literacy lesson for example, pupils in Year 1 made good progress in matching letters and sounds as they eagerly took part in class and group activities to practice and improve their skills. They worked well together and showed that they were building well on previous learning because of the fast pace of teaching and shared support by other pupils. More-able pupils do not always achieve their potential because there are too few additional tasks in some classes to extend their skills. Pupils make particularly good progress in art. The wide range of art from different cultures that is displayed around the school shows the school's commitment to improving pupils' multi-cultural awareness. For example, they regularly work with professional artists to create high quality paintings and collages. Their artwork about the 'dreamtime' of the Australian Aborigines is exceptional and shows their outstanding awareness of other cultures. Pupils also do well in music. Those in Year 2, for example, all learn to play the recorder.

Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They get on well together and are polite and helpful. They know and understand how to keep fit and healthy and proudly show how they bring fruit every day in their lunch boxes. Cooking helps pupils to develop a good awareness of healthy snacks and they regularly learn about keeping healthy in lessons. In Year 1 for example, pupils really enjoyed a practical task in which they planted beans. They were able to explain clearly why their bean needed soil, water and sunlight. Because of some excellent questioning by the teacher, pupils were able to make the link between planting their bean and eating beans once they had grown. They made good progress in their understanding of growth and of healthy eating. The strong commitment of staff has resulted in effective links with the community so that many additional rich experiences, including a wide range of after-school clubs and many visits and visitors, play an important part in pupils' learning and their enthusiasm. They talked excitedly about their football coaches and how they were improving their skills. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The rich range of curriculum experiences is a particular strength of provision and have a very positive impact on learning. Some excellent Islamic art, for example, shows that pupils are well aware of the many different cultures and faiths in modern Britain. Teachers' planning is variable but most plan some exciting activities for their pupils. Practical tasks are a key feature of the best lessons. These enable pupils to take part actively in learning. This was exemplified in a lesson in Year 2 where pupils were learning about plants as part of a science activity. Because pupils are regularly involved in planting and growing their own vegetables, they were quickly able to explain the function of the roots, stem and leaves of a plant. Their language skills were reinforced very well as they explained how 'roots absorb water' and accurately explained the 'function of the stem'. Questioning in Year 2 is a strength, extending the skills of more-able pupils, but in a few lessons there is too little planning for this particular group to enable them to achieve as well as they could. Regular, good assessment enables teachers to know how well pupils are doing. There are meticulous procedures for the care of all pupils. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly good, resulting in their good progress towards meeting their individual targets. Those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and those with specific learning difficulties are supported well in lessons resulting in their good progress. The school works extremely well with most external support agencies but has not had the support of an education welfare officer recently to help staff improve the attendance of a few pupils.

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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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the school, which are embedded through effective provision. This is evident in the rigorous and accurate self-evaluation that enables leaders to understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders are committed to improvement and drive this by high levels of training for staff and the continued promotion of the 'arts' for all pupils to help improve their life chances. The school makes good use of challenging targets for most groups of pupils and has met its aims of enabling pupils to reach at least average standards this year. Good links with external services enable pupils to access different opportunities and improve provision, for instance, through clubs such as the computer club and sports coaching from Tottenham Hotspur staff, which is extremely well received by pupils. A business link has resulted in the development with pupils and parents of a sensory garden and Essex Wildlife Trust and has been instrumental in working with pupils and parents to develop the wildlife areas around the vast school grounds. Music and arts festivals are regular features of school life and full equality of opportunity is secured for all pupils to attend.

The school is working to positively eliminate discrimination although a few more-able pupils do not fulfil their potential. Governors are committed to promoting community cohesion. There is a good strategy in place based on a clear audit of the school's context. As a result there are some excellent links with the local community and a productive link with a school in Bournemouth, which is helping pupils to learn about life by the sea. A link with a school in Sri Lanka is helping to promote pupils' increased awareness of different countries and lifestyles. Safeguarding procedures, including child protection arrangements, are robust. Links with parents are good. Many regularly help at the school and parents are regularly questioned about new initiatives or changes. The school's communication with parents is very thorough and regular. Parents rightly believe that their children are safe and secure at school. Procedures for health and safety and risk assessment are rigorous and known by all staff.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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	3
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

Parents rightly say that their children enjoy school. One said, 'Alderton has given our child a happy start to school life.' Children are keen to learn and take part in all the activities offered with enthusiasm. For example, they showed good concentration as they made models of paper birds for the class 'pet shop'. They understood how to use simple tools safely and chatted nicely to each other as they successfully completed their task. Although teaching during the inspection was mainly satisfactory, monitoring shows that teaching over time is good so that children make good progress from their starting points. Questioning is a particular strength of lessons, encouraging children to think carefully about their answers. As a result, many achieve well and though still below average by the time they enter Year 1, they make good progress from their starting points. They make the best progress in communication, language and literacy because of the exciting approach to learning letters and sounds. They also achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development due to caring support and effective modelling by staff. Children have plenty of opportunities to play and learn in the spacious outdoor area. For example, they plant vegetables in the school garden which the school cook prepares for their lunches. The many opportunities to visit places of interest in the locality play an important role in promoting children's understanding of the world around them. During the inspection, they were very excited as they prepared for a visit to the local museum and talked enthusiastically about what they might see. Leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Welfare arrangements are rigorous. Children's achievements are regularly monitored and tracked so that any weaknesses are quickly picked up. A vast array of past photographs shows that children benefit from a rich and varied range of exciting learning opportunities but planning does

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not regularly enable children to make decisions and choices for themselves about what they want to do next.

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 are extremely supportive of the school's work and many speak very highly of the way in which the school provides for their children. 'Staff are committed, interested, caring, understanding and very helpful,' is a typical comment from a parent. They are right when they say that teaching is good and that their children make good progress. A very small minority do not think that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was good and there was clear evidence that the school manages behaviour well.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Alderton Infant 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 175 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	71	19	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	81	13	19	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	56	29	43	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	57	27	40	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	46	69	21	31	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	58	27	40	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	61	24	36	1	1	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)	41	61	22	33	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	61	24	36	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	45	31	46	4	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	49	30	45	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	45	67	22	33	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	49	73	18	27	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



17 June 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of The Alderton Infant School, Loughton, IG10 3HE

Thank you for your help during our recent visit to your school. I enjoyed having lunch with some of you and hearing all about the things you do. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found out about your school.

Alderton is a good school and it helps you to do well in your lessons.

You told us that you enjoy coming to school and you behave well.

Most of you know all about healthy eating and keeping fit.

You told us that you feel safe at school.

Your teachers give you exciting things to do. We were very pleased to see all your lovely artwork around the school. We really liked your models.

You have lots of clubs and many of you go to at least one of these.

You do well in your lessons and learn many new things at school.

The leaders of your school keep you safe.

We have asked your headteacher and other leaders to do three things to help you do even better:

- to make sure that those of you who find learning easy have more things to do in lessons
- to make sure that the youngest children in the Reception classes have plenty of choice about their learning and decide for themselves what they want to do next
- to make sure that you all come to school as often as you can, and you could help with this by coming to school every day.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Denise Morris

Lead Inspector

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