

Amington Heath Community School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124176
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	340509
Inspection dates	14–15 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Geof Timms

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Martin Jenkins
Headteacher	Mr Oliver Fordham
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, representatives of the local authority and other partnerships, parents and other friends of the school. They observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' work, school policies and other documentation, pupils' and staff questionnaires. In addition 31 questionnaires were returned by parents and these were also scrutinised.

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

- the current standards in Year 6 and throughout the school, and how well pupils with special educational needs achieve
- what the school is planning to do to improve its curriculum
- what are the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning throughout the school
- how effective is the new leadership team in addressing the recent dip in standards.

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average school. The proportion of the pupils entitled to free school meals is well above average. There is a below average number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or who have English as an additional language, mainly from other White heritages. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average overall and very high in some cohorts. The main needs are moderate learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. An above average number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than normal. The school hosts a Children's Centre with SureStart provision. The school has been awarded Healthy School status.

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

The school has been through some difficult times and significant changes over recent years. Satisfactory progress is being made under the current leadership team and current standards are rising; in Year 6 they are already higher than the poor results achieved last year. These were due to a number of issues surrounding that specific cohort and the school has now returned to the picture of steady and continually rising standards that was evident previously. The school is demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to continue improving in the future.

Parents and pupils are largely happy with the work of the school. The only significant concern expressed in some questionnaires was about pupils' behaviour and these issues were largely historical and have been effectively addressed by the school. Inspectors found a happy school with largely well-behaved and positive pupils, and pupils themselves talk about the good systems for rewarding good behaviour and dealing with any incidents. Even so, attendance rates are well below average and too many parents do not insist on their children attending school regularly enough.

Although standards dipped sharply in Year 6 in 2009, as the unvalidated results show, in Year 2 the results improved greatly and are closer to the national average; this represents some good progress made by those pupils. In addition, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities often make good progress from very low starting points. Other groups of pupils make satisfactory progress in line with the majority. This satisfactory progress is the result of sound teaching overall, although with some good features. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and also for the older Key Stage 2 pupils is often good and demonstrates the progress that pupils can make when teaching is well planned and challenging, and activities are well matched to pupils' needs. This remains inconsistent and not enough of the teaching is of a high enough quality for all pupils to make the real improvements in their learning that are needed to raise standards to a higher level. Teachers are not yet using available data well enough when planning. Activities do not always motivate pupils sufficiently and the use of resources and displays does not support pupils' learning consistently enough.

The school is effectively led by the new leadership team, and they are clearly focused on raising standards and ambitious for the school to improve. Work they have already done to improve behaviour, raise standards in mathematics, prepare for curriculum changes and better analyse the available data, supports the sound capacity to improve seen during the inspection. This shows that self-evaluation is satisfactory. However, the school has not addressed the needs of community cohesion sufficiently and children do not have a good understanding of how others live in this country or elsewhere. In addition, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not effective enough in helping staff

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learn from each other and to spread the good practice that exists.

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?

- Ensure that at least 65% of pupils throughout the school reach the expected levels and make the expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics each year.
- Ensure more of the teaching is good or better by:
 - the sharper and more effective use of assessment data when planning lessons
 - providing motivating activities that enable pupils to use their writing and computer skills in different subjects
 - the more consistent use of resources and displays to aid learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership at all levels by:
 - ensuring good use is made of rigorous and detailed monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
 - auditing and improving the provision for community cohesion in order to improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of how others live.
- Improve attendance rates by better monitoring of absences and closer working with families.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 rose steadily over recent years although they were still well below national averages. In 2009 the unvalidated results show that the Year 6 results were exceptionally low. This was due to a variety of factors including very high special educational needs, some very significant behavioural issues and issues regarding staffing. The current leadership team, together with the enthusiastic staff, have ensured that that year was a blip and that the current standards are back on track to continue rising to reach national levels.

The current standards in Year 6, observed in lessons and in pupils' work, are much improved and more pupils are on track to reach the higher levels this year. Targets set for the current cohort are challenging and good teaching is helping make them achievable. For example, in one good lesson pupils worked well together to solve mathematical problems that were set at an appropriately challenging level. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported through a range of interventions. This is evident in the progress they make which is often above that achieved nationally by similar pupils.

In Key Stage 1 standards are also rising and those achieved in reading, writing and mathematics in Year 2 in 2009 were the highest for many years. Throughout the school, communication skills such as speaking, listening and writing remain below average and are a major focus for improvement.

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The school ensures pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. Although behaviour has been an issue in the past, one Year 6 pupil explained how they 'can now be good role models' and 'We can change it.' Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is sound overall, although their understanding of their own and others' cultures is weaker. A good harvest assembly enabled one class to demonstrate their knowledge of environmental issues and the behaviour and respect shown by the rest of the school was very good. The school is helping prepare them for secondary school by improving their learning habits although too many have basic skills that remain low. Through the school council and other responsibilities pupils make a satisfactory contribution to the school and wider community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
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 school has a team of teachers who demonstrate a positive attitude towards their work and towards the pupils in their care. This has already had a positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes towards school and is beginning to have a similar impact

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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on standards of achievement. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong and the pupils themselves can explain how the teachers help them learn, especially through the use of marking to help them understand how they can improve. Some of the classrooms provide bright, vibrant learning environments but, in some, displays and resources are not very effectively used as a learning tool. This results in missed opportunities to use excellent examples of work or interactive displays. Planning often ensures tasks differ slightly for pupils' different prior attainment but this is not always very effective and teachers need to be more aware through more regular assessments of how well they are challenging their pupils with new learning. Even so, one pupil commented that he was learning more this year because the teacher 'is pushing us' to make better progress. The school has a satisfactory curriculum but good plans to develop it over the coming year to create more links between subjects so pupils can use their skills in different situations. The computers in the information and communication technology suite are used well in whole class lessons but there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to access these for research or other purposes. The school looks after its pupils well, keeping them safe and providing appropriate support where needed. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons and those who find it difficult to maintain consistently good behaviour are well supported in and out of lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Although there are good aspects to the new leadership team's work, the lack of time for this to have had much impact means that this aspect remains satisfactory but improving. However, the work to improve behaviour, and to assess strengths and weaknesses in other aspects of the provision, clearly shows the potential for much improvement. The staff are striving with growing success to ensure all pupils have equal opportunity to achieve well. Above all, the school is open about what it needs to do to improve and leaders are willing to look for and make effective use of outside support to help raise standards. For example, local authority expertise is being well used to improve aspects of the teaching of mathematics and staff demonstrate very positive attitudes towards accepting advice and trying new ideas. Such partnerships with outside agencies, such as the children's centre, are sound overall and have a positive impact on provision.

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The governing body has provided satisfactory support to the school over time but finds it difficult to maintain a full governing body as too few parents are willing to take an active part. However, the governors have ensured all safeguarding requirements are met, although the school's work on community cohesion remains inadequate. Links with parents are satisfactory and they are positive about the new leadership team. A good number of parents attended their class assembly during the inspection, and many Year 4 parents had lunch with the pupils as part of a regular, ongoing scheme for each year group. Even so too many do not ensure their children's attendance or habits of punctuality, despite the school's encouragement.

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	3
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	3
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	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Many children enter the Nursery class with levels of experience and skills that are below those expected, and for their personal and social, and communication skills often well below. The current provision in Nursery and Reception is good with some effective teaching, good use of resources and very effective relationships that support children's growing enjoyment of being at school. During a walk to find examples of autumn colours in leaves and elsewhere, the children in Reception demonstrated real awe and wonder when the teacher opened a seed head to show the tiny seeds inside.

The progress children make remains satisfactory but has the potential to grow as the good provision begins to have more impact on learning. The school has a good outdoor area for children to use and good opportunities to use this are evident. There is a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities, and an appropriate number of opportunities to learn through play. The leadership of this part of the school is

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satisfactory. Although standards have been below those expected by the end of Reception, the overall outcomes are satisfactory because the staff ensure good progress in children's personal, social and emotional development and this helps prepare them well for Key Stage 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Only a small number of parents (31) returned the inspection questionnaire. Apart from the concerns mentioned earlier about behaviour, most of the parents are very happy with the school and the progress their children make. One or two felt they would like more information about how well their child is doing but the school ensures a broadly typical range of opportunities for parents to meet their child's teacher. The provision for a child with special educational needs was particularly praised by a parent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Amington Heath Community 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 31 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 151 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	16	52	13	42	2	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	13	42	16	52	2	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	6	19	23	74	1	3	1	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	7	23	21	68	2	6	1	3
The teaching is good at this school	6	20	22	73	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	16	23	74	2	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	23	22	71	1	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)	5	17	21	70	1	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	6	19	21	68	3	10	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	13	20	65	1	3	6	19
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	27	15	50	4	13	1	3
The school is led and managed effectively	7	23	19	63	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	9	29	18	58	2	6	2	6

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.



16 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Amington Heath Community School, Tamworth, B77 4EN

This letter is to share with you our findings after our recent visit to your school. Firstly, I would like to thank you all for your help and for the way you talked to us and told us about the school. We found you very friendly and interested, and we are sure that you will be able to help the staff make your school even better in the future.

Some of the good things we found were:

Your behaviour is much better than it has been.

You are working hard to learn new things in most lessons and your work is getting better.

Mr Fordham and the teachers are working hard to help you learn even more.

The school is a very caring place and the adults all look after you well.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are being helped to become good learners.

You all know how to keep yourselves safe and healthy.

We have asked the governors and the staff to do these things to help the school get even better in the future:

Help you get better at reading, writing and mathematics.

Help the teachers get even better at helping you learn.

Make sure the staff know how well you are doing and to use that information when planning lessons

Help you learn a lot more about how other people live.

Reduce the number of times that children are absent from school.

You can help more by making sure you are always at school and that you arrive on time.

Thank you again for your help. Enjoy your time at Amington Heath and keep working hard!

Yours sincerely

Geof Timms

Lead inspector

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