

Alderman Leach Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	132204
Local Authority	Darlington
Inspection number	341310
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Christine Millett

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	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jan Cossin
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Thompson
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons, observed eight teachers and spent approximately 60% of inspection time looking at learning. Meetings were held with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school development plan, the school's monitoring records and analyses of pupils' attainment and progress. Inspectors analysed 132 questionnaires returned by parents.

- the achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and how successfully provision ensures an effective start to school
- the impact of school strategies to ensure a satisfactory level of progress continues through Key stage 1
- the progress being made in developing community cohesion

Information about the school

Alderman Leach is a larger than average-size primary school. A very large majority of pupils are White British, the remainder representing a wide range of other ethnicities. A very small minority speak English as an additional language. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average whilst the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. An increasing number of pupils enter and leave school during the course of the school year. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in one Nursery and two Reception classes. The school provides a breakfast club three mornings a week.

The school has received several awards including the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark, Artsmark gold and Basic Skills Award.

A Nursery, wrap-around care and holiday club are managed by a private provider and make use of the school facilities. These were not included in this inspection.

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

Alderman Leach is a good school with good capacity to improve further. The school has recently experienced some adjustments made necessary by staffing changes, as well as the influx of a very large number of additional pupils. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher these changes have been well managed with staff working together to ensure that all pupils continue to achieve as well as they can. Of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, a very large majority is supportive and values the standard of care provided by the school. 'We are delighted with the education our child receives.' was a typical comment.

The school provides a welcoming and stimulating setting where attractive displays showcase pupils' work and achievements. Children get off to a good start in Early Years Foundation Stage and achieve well throughout their time in school. By the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average though rising. The drive to raise standards further, particularly in Key Stage 1, rightly remains a school priority. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar good progress to their peers as their needs are identified quickly and they are well supported. Good achievement in basic skills, competence in information and communication technology, above average attendance and good personal development ensure pupils are well prepared for the future.

Pupils are polite and exhibit good behaviour in classrooms as well as in the playground. They collaborate well and show concern for each other. They are keen to take on responsibilities and contribute well to the school and local community. Their experience of different cultures and religions is broadened through the curriculum.

Lessons are well planned and the quality of teaching is good overall though there are some inconsistencies. The school has identified this as an area for development in order to maintain the current upward trend in standards. Work is marked regularly and gives pupils a clear indication as to how to improve their work. Assessment is well used to support learning and most pupils are involved in self-assessment. The curriculum offers a wide range of learning opportunities within and beyond lessons which are successful in maintaining pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Pupils and staff speak enthusiastically of the activities that accompany the cross-curricular themes they are studying. Enrichment opportunities include the teaching of a language and of music by specialist teachers. Good care, guidance and support ensure a secure and encouraging environment where pupils say they feel safe and valued. One pupil summed up the views of many in saying, 'You feel safe and well taken care of.'

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues raised in the previous

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inspection report, notably the strengthening of the roles of middle managers who are now an integral part of the management team. Self-evaluation is accurate. The relatively new governing body are very supportive of school and keen to develop their roles in order to play a more active part in school life. An action plan for community cohesion is in place. However, due to the sudden increase in the number of new families to the area the school has been focusing on strengthening local links, with much success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards across the school, particularly in Key stage 1, by:
- - increasing the number of good and outstanding lessons by giving staff the opportunity to share and build on existing outstanding practice
- - ensuring the same high level of expectation is present in all lessons.
- Develop the role of governors to enable them to play a full part in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school by providing opportunities for them to become more familiar with processes such as self-evaluation and target-setting.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils develop good attitudes towards learning as they move up through the school. They enjoy learning and collaborate well when working in groups or in pairs. Pupils were keen to engage the inspectors in conversation and expressed their views clearly and openly.

The quality of learning seen in lessons during the inspection was good overall and the work seen in pupils' books confirmed the school's own analysis of pupils making good progress in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2. Progress appears to plateau in Key Stage 1 which has been identified by the school and the curriculum modified in order to address this. Recent data analysis shows that most pupils across the school are on track to meet their targets. An increasing number of pupils join the school partway through the school year. The progress of these pupils is monitored carefully to ensure they also achieve well. After being broadly average for a number of years, standards at the end of Year 6 in 2009 showed improvement. Pupils in the current Years 5 and 6 are on course to reach higher standards by the end of Key Stage 2 than in previous years.

Pupils enjoy school. Above average attendance supports this. As one pupil said, 'I enjoy school and no school could be better.' Relationships throughout school are good. A small minority of pupils expressed concerns over behaviour in school, but no instances of inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection and pupils were well-mannered and friendly. Pupils of all ages have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating and regular exercise. Their contribution to the local community is well established through, for example, performances by the choir and work with the Park Ranger. Contributions to future economic well-being are developed through activities such as calculating the costs involved in buying, housing and feeding the class guinea pigs and then fund-raising to meet those costs. The class then shared the responsibilities of looking after them. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

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Pupils have a marked sense of right and wrong and enjoy the different cultural experiences the school provides.

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	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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers engage pupils' interest in learning through the use of interactive whiteboards and other visual aids. Behaviour in lessons is good. Very occasionally, when the pace of the lesson drops, a few pupils lose concentration. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. However, many of the lessons seen were at least good and the school is working to improve this picture. Overall, teachers have high expectations, good subject knowledge and consider all levels of ability when questioning. Pupils are aware of their targets and what they need to do to improve their work. Other adults in the classroom give valuable support.

The curriculum has been completely reorganised and there is an imaginative balance of subjects which are mapped out to include visits or visitors related to the themes. Skills are developed well across a broad range of experiences. Pupils are enthused by the topics they are studying. For example, pupils made great efforts to dress up for 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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Florence Nightingale day and entered wholeheartedly into the role play. The international dimension to the curriculum is strengthened by the learning of French. Pupils feel well supported by the school and know to whom they can turn if they have a problem. They feel safe and know that their concerns are taken seriously. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met through close liaison between teachers, support staff and outside agencies.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The hard working headteacher has led the school through considerable changes, resulting in current improvements. She is well supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff who have been empowered to take on further responsibilities. Although many of the governors are relatively new to their roles, they are totally committed to improving the school further. The school development plan focuses on the most important areas for improvement and is clear about how targets are to be achieved. Teaching is improving as a result of careful monitoring and planned professional development. There are effective links with a range of external agencies, including the local secondary school, that support the progress and well-being of the pupils. Parents are kept informed through a variety of means including the Learning Network. Community cohesion is currently satisfactory but this is an improving picture. The school ensures that pupils understand their local community, and their understanding of life beyond Great Britain is developing through the curriculum. Safeguarding is robust with procedures, policies and practice securely in place. The school deploys its resources well and gives good value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Provision in Early Years Foundation Stage is good and children thrive in a stimulating and thoroughly enjoyable environment. Children settle in quickly as they start school due to the warm relationships that adults establish with them. Key workers support children to be independent, make choices in the activities they will take part in and develop social skills that ensure good behaviour.

Children start Nursery with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with age-related expectations. Some children start with lower skills in language and communication and physical development. Good teaching and a strong, well organised curriculum ensure good progress and by the end of Reception most children have exceeded national expectations.

Thorough assessment ensures that individual children can be tracked regularly and targeted support given to help them make good progress. Achievements are recorded in attractive 'Learning Journeys' and shared with parents. The stimulating environment enables children to have fun while they investigate for themselves and follow up ideas. Good quality, skilled teaching by all staff ensures that children develop their basic skills well. Learning flows between indoors and outdoors as children move between their chosen activities. The high quality support promotes children's welfare well and they feel safe and secure. For example, they demonstrate good development in their social skills, taking care of each other, working amicably together and tidying up responsibly.

Good leadership is focused strongly on continuous improvement. Good links are developed with parents who speak of feeling, 'well-informed by the helpful friendly staff'.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally wholly supportive of the school. The very large majority were positive about the way the school cares for and educates their children. Their positive comments were confirmed by inspection evidence. A very small minority raised negative issues which mostly concerned the school taking into account parents' views and behaviour. These were followed up during the inspection and it was found that the issues had been addressed or inspectors could find no evidence to uphold these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alderman Leach 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 132 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 403 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	77	60	42	33	6	5	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	75	59	52	41	0	0	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	68	53	51	40	8	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	60	47	58	45	7	5	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	68	53	54	42	5	4	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	55	50	39	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	66	52	58	45	4	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)	56	44	58	45	7	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	61	48	57	45	8	6	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	43	56	44	12	9	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	45	54	42	10	8	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	57	45	49	38	13	10	5	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	69	54	43	34	13	10	1	1

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

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

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

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

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

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

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

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

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



1 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alderman Leach Primary School, Darlington, DL2 2GF

Thank you for all your help when we visited your school. You were very polite and helped us to understand how you feel about your school. You told us that you go to a good school and we agree. We also found that:

- you get off to a good start in the Nursery class and make good progress during your time in the school
- you enjoy coming to school and are keen to learn
- adults look after you well and make sure you are safe
- teaching is good and teachers try to make lessons interesting and exciting
- you show a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and know how to stay safe
- you contribute to the life of the school and the local community
- your school is helping you prepare for the next stages in your education.

To make your school better we would like you to reach higher standards. This can happen if your teachers share ideas with each other so that more lessons are good or outstanding.

We would also like the new governors to find out more about how your targets are set and how the school is run.

I know you will help your teachers to carry on making your school better by continuing to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Christine Millett

Lead inspector

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