

# The Arches Community Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	134897
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	341563
<b>Inspection dates</b>	11–12 May 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lynne Read

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	196
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Carol Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Michelle Ashfield
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Saughall Road Blacon Chester CH1 5EZ
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and observed teaching in all classes. They held meetings with governors, managers, staff, groups of pupils and the School Improvement Partner. In observing the school's work, they looked at pupils' workbooks, assessment records, school policies and school development plans. Inspectors analysed 93 questionnaires completed by parents and carers and 81 completed by pupils.

- whether the improvements in pupils' achievement were sustained
- provision and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- the accuracy of self-evaluation procedures and the effectiveness of school improvement planning in raising attainment.

## Information about the school

The Arches is amalgamated from two separate schools and serves an urban area. Around half of the pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is more than double the national average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and an above-average proportion has special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the Activemark and Healthy Schools award as well as being recognised for good computer work and partnerships within the community. It has close links with a nearby Children's Centre that provides nursery education. A private provider offers before- and after-school care in the local area. This provision was subject to a separate inspection, the report for which is available on the Ofsted website.

**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?**

**4**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**3**

### Main findings

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required to ensure that safeguarding procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage meet statutory requirements.

The overall effectiveness of the school is judged inadequate because legal requirements regarding the outdoor premises in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not met. Because of this issue, care, guidance and support and governance are inadequate. In other respects, the inspection found that The Arches Primary provides a good quality of education and pupils' personal development is good.

Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. They benefit from an interesting range of activities indoors but the curriculum for learning in the outdoor areas is underdeveloped. Pupils' attainment is broadly average by Year 6 which marks good progress from a below average starting point. However, too few pupils attain the higher level in writing and mathematics. Throughout school, achievement has improved and is good. Teaching is good overall but there are a few inconsistencies. For example, the quality of advice given to pupils to help them improve, through marking and targets, varies from outstanding to satisfactory. In most lessons, the more able pupils experience a good level of challenge, but there are occasions when they are not fully stretched, especially in writing and mathematics. The good curriculum includes French lessons as well as a strong emphasis on creative work and physical development. Music is a strength at the school, with all pupils having opportunities to play an instrument and perform for audiences. Planning links subjects together into 'topic work'. This makes learning fun and ensures that there are plentiful opportunities for pupils to practise and enhance their skills.

Behaviour is good and there is a calm, productive atmosphere in school. Pupils know and respect school rules and there is a good system of rewards for good conduct, effort or thoughtful deeds. Pupils assert that they feel safe and that any incidence of bullying is dealt with swiftly. They have a very good awareness of moral and social issues and show good respect for cultures and beliefs that are different from their own. Strong links with other schools and community agencies, such as the police and health professionals, ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families have good support.

Senior leaders carry out regular evaluations of provision and pupils' achievement is checked termly. As a result, the school has an accurate view of its performance. The

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headteacher provides inspirational leadership and is highly regarded by pupils, parents and staff. Strong teamwork and a shared vision for excellence among staff have resulted in good improvements in progress, standards and attendance. This good track record holds much promise for the future of the school. However, because of some shortcomings in checking on requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, leadership and management and the school's capacity for sustained improvement are satisfactory overall.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - - ensuring that all statutory requirements are met for safeguarding
  - - developing the range of learning activities outdoors.
- Improve the proportion of pupils who attain the higher level in writing and mathematics by:
  - - ensuring that all lessons provide good challenge for the more able pupils
  - - ensuring that the good practice in marking and the advice given to pupils to help them improve, is applied consistently in all classes.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils have good attitudes to their learning and enjoy their lessons. Achievement is good, including for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. On entry to Year 1, pupils' attainment is typically just below that expected. The pace of learning has accelerated considerably over the last two years so progress in both key stages is good. An increased emphasis on learning about sounds and letters is helping to boost reading and writing skills, especially in Key Stage 1. Standards are broadly average and the legacy of underachievement from previous years has largely been eliminated. However, fewer pupils than seen nationally work at the higher level in writing and mathematics than in reading. The school has succeeded in boosting boys' progress in writing by introducing topics that fire their interest. Similarly, girls' confidence and progress in mathematics has improved so both groups now achieve equally well.

Behaviour is good and pupils say they feel happy and safe. They know that the school does not tolerate any form of harassment and they are confident that adults will act on any issue that they raise. A good programme for personal education ensures a good understanding of healthy living and pupils enjoy plenty of exercise. Through various enterprise projects and links with business, pupils develop a good understanding of managing money and the world of work. They have an average range of basic skills and attend school regularly. As a result, they are satisfactorily prepared for their future. Good opportunities exist for pupils to experience responsibility. For example, 'buddies', and the road safety and recycling teams provide much help in the day-to-day running of school. School councillors contribute enthusiastically to the process of decision making both at The Arches and in the School's Parliament for the local area.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

## How effective is the provision?

Lessons include very clear objectives so pupils always know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers have a detailed view of pupils' progress and plan tasks to build on their prior learning. As a result, lessons usually include good levels of challenge. Occasionally, however, the more able are not working to full potential or they waste time by completing work at the average level before moving on to extension activities. Good opportunities for pupils to evaluate their own understanding are helping them to develop independent skills of learning. Some pupils, especially the older ones, are well aware of their targets for learning so they know where to focus their efforts. However, a small number of pupils are vague about the guidance they have been given and it is therefore less useful. Some marking is excellent and includes very helpful advice but practice is variable. Teaching assistants are very knowledgeable and well deployed to provide additional support, both in class and in small group sessions.

Careful planning keeps enjoyment at the heart of learning and includes rich, practical experiences. For example, pupils learn about nature and responsibility as they help to care for the school's chickens. Skills in literacy, numeracy, and information and

<sup>1</sup> 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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communication technology (ICT) are extended through topic work that cuts across subject boundaries and takes account of pupils' interests. The programme for personal development informs pupils about potential dangers and teaches them how to assess and avoid risks. A strength of the curriculum lies in the tailoring of tasks and support to meet pupils' specific needs. A range of intervention programmes and individual tuition provide very good support for personal, academic and language development. Similar provision to challenge gifted and talented pupils is in the developmental stage. Pupils take good advantage of a varied and interesting programme of extra-curricular clubs and competitive sport. The residential visits from Year 2 upwards are very popular and include opportunities for adventure activity, exploration and to see historic places.

Overall care, guidance and support are inadequate because of the issues surrounding safeguarding for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, some aspects of the care provided are good. The school goes to great lengths to secure expert help or resources to meet pupils' needs. The good work of the learning mentor, a well-equipped sensory room and the services of a play therapist provide very good support for pupils who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The headteacher is currently seeking funding to overcome the concerns with safeguarding noted in the report. Meanwhile, the security of Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils at playtime is covered by careful risk assessment and the strategic deployment of a good number of staff. Productive partnerships with the Children's Centre and local secondary school ensure pupils have a smooth transition into the Reception class and to the next phase of education.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>4</b>

**How effective are leadership and management?**

The headteacher provides good leadership and clear direction in constantly driving the school forwards. The senior management team monitor the work in Key Stages 1 and 2 closely, constantly checking pupils' progress. This allows them to act quickly where pupils are not meeting expected targets and is an important reason behind the improved progress for these age groups. However, the management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is not sufficiently rigorous in checking that all requirements are met.

Community cohesion is good, resulting in very positive relationships. A strong partnership with local schools and agencies is bringing families on board to help solve problems. For example, the incidence of pupils transferring from one school to another partway through their education has been drastically reduced and attendance rates

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improved. International links help to foster an understanding of life in other countries but pupils have little opportunity to meet others from different ethnic backgrounds. Safeguarding is inadequate overall due to issues in the Early Years Foundation Stage but there are also some positive elements. For example, child protection procedures are very thorough and staff are well equipped to deal with any concerns. All staff are carefully vetted to ensure they are fit to work with children. The school's equality policy is followed in practice and successful in removing barriers to learning. However, lessons sometimes lack enough challenge for the more able so equality of opportunity is satisfactory overall. The governors play an active role in school improvement planning and have a secure overview of attainment and achievement. However, they have not been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring that safeguarding procedures are met. Governance is therefore inadequate. Value for money is good and the school is efficiently run on a day-to-day basis.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

**Early Years Foundation Stage**

Children enter the Reception class with a varying range of skills. Overall, their development on entry is below average, especially in personal development, language and communication. Good induction procedures, links with parents and carers and the Children's Centre, ensure that children settle quickly. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. The indoor classroom includes imaginative experiences with plenty of opportunity for children to explore and develop their independence. The outdoor area, however, is underdeveloped and does not include a balanced variety of tasks across all areas of learning. Children make satisfactory progress overall, although it is often good



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in terms of personal skills. By the time they enter Year 1, they are working close to expected levels other than in early writing and numeracy skills, which are below those expected of their age. Safeguarding for this age group is inadequate. Monitoring and evaluation systems are inadequate and have failed to identify and address a breach of legal requirements.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>4</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	4
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	4

## Views of parents and carers

The parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire have positive views and almost all are happy with their child's experience at the school. Quotes that reflect these views include, 'we are constantly delighted with The Arches', and, 'the staff are friendly and keep me up to date'. There are commendations for the good quality of teaching and leadership and management. Inspectors agree with these views. No major issues were raised by parents and carers.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Arches Community 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 93 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 196 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	55	57	41	42	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	68	70	29	30	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	61	63	34	35	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	62	64	33	34	2	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	61	63	35	36	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	60	62	36	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	57	42	43	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	50	52	45	46	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	57	41	42	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	60	37	38	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	57	38	39	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	58	60	39	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	65	33	34	1	1	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](http://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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



13 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Arches Community Primary School, Chester, CH1 5EZ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave my colleagues and me when we inspected your school. We thoroughly enjoyed our time with you and appreciated all the help you gave us. I would like to tell you what we found out.

The Arches is a happy school that provides you with a good education. There is however, a problem with safeguarding the area where the Reception children learn. This is serious and so we have judged that your school requires a notice to improve. This means that it will be visited by an inspector who will check that things are getting better. I have, therefore, asked your headteacher and governors to act quickly in solving the problem.

Your behaviour is good and you get on very well together. You are a credit to your families and your school. I think those of you on the school council and others with responsibilities do a good job in helping to run the school day and making decisions. It is good to see how you care for your chickens. They look very content in their run and I hope that your egg marketing project is successful.

You are keen to learn and work hard. Those of you in Reception have settled well and are learning to be independent. I have asked your teachers to provide more opportunities for learning outside. I think you will enjoy that because I saw how much you enjoyed your activities in the fresh air. In Years 1 to 6 you are making good progress and have improved your work. Well done! I think you can go one step better, especially those of you who find your work easier than most. I have, therefore, asked your teachers to give you some extra challenges, especially in mathematics and writing. I have also asked them to check that you have the best possible advice to guide your progress, for example through marking and focusing on your learning targets. You can help by continuing to work hard. Thank you once again for the interesting conversations we had and for letting us share your work and play. Please accept my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynne Read

Lead inspector

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