

Acorns Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 130873 |
| Local Authority | Warwickshire |
| Inspection number | 360144 |
| Inspection dates | 13–14 September 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Alan Dobbins |

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 | 48 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jackie Brown |
| Headteacher | Ms Jane O'sullivan (Acting Headteacher) |
| Date of previous school inspection | 28 February 2008 |
| School address | School Close Long Compton Shipston-on-Stour |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed in part or in full 8 lessons and all the school's teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, teachers, the school improvement partner, the local authority advisor to the school, the headteacher of a nearby school, the consultant headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor. The inspector looked at data the school has on pupils' progress and analysed documents and policies. He scrutinised 16 parental questionnaires and spoke with 8 parents.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. He looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the school in promoting the progress of all pupils against their individual targets for learning
- how effective is the curriculum, and the arrangements for the care, guidance and support of pupils, in promoting learning
- how effective are leaders, including governors, in managing and driving improvement.

Information about the school

Acorns School is a much smaller than average sized school that serves, primarily, the village of Long Compton. Most of the children are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and of learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that found in other schools. The acting headteacher, appointed from the school's staff, took up her position on September 1 2010. Although formally appointed at the beginning of this term, functionally she led the school for the Summer Term in the absence of the substantive headteacher. She is supported by a consultant headteacher, who leads a nearby school.

Over the two days of the inspection, the governing body formally announced to staff and to parents and carers their intention to move the school towards joining another local school in a federated arrangement.

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

Acorns School is a good school. Pupils are making better progress over a wider range of learning experiences than was the case at the time of the last inspection. One parent said, 'This is a lovely school. I am very thankful my daughter is able to go to it.'

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage at about the levels of development expected for them nationally. They settle well, and quickly establish outstanding relationships with their adults. Over their time in the Early Years, because of the good provision and leadership, they progress well in each of the early learning areas. They enter Year 1 slightly above the expected national levels. In Years 1 to 6, in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils make good progress so that, when they leave school, they attain at levels better than nationally expected. They do equally well in the other subjects, especially in art and design, French and in design and technology.

Acorns is a warm and welcoming place where staff and pupils are very comfortable with each other. Pupils say they like it very much because they 'are able to make friends easily' and the staff 'are so nice.' Pupils are proud of their school and say they feel very safe, and enjoy being there. They show they have fully embraced their role as learners by attending regularly, behaving well in lessons and throughout the school and, routinely, working hard to do their best. Pupils clearly enjoy each others company and in friendly supportive surroundings take pleasure in celebrating the success of their friends as much as they do their own. They learn to make difficult choices well, including those to do with staying safe and keeping healthy and have a clear idea of what is right and what is wrong. They are prepared well as learners, and as young people, and have high expectations to be successful when they move to their next school.

Teaching is good and this has helped pupils improve the progress they make against their targets for learning. However, in Years 1 to 6 the approach to lesson planning is not consistent between teachers and information on what pupils know and can do is not always used well enough in directing learning for all the pupils. The improved curriculum matches well with pupils' learning needs and provides more opportunities for them to find out about the traditions and cultures of those who live outside the local area.

Over a period when the school has experienced unique difficulties due to mass flooding in the area and, more recently, change in leadership, governors have provided outstanding support and challenge. Through their regular visits and detailed procedures they know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They have high expectations and a clear plan and time frame for continuing to move the school forward; ultimately, to provide their pupils with outstanding provision. The consultant

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headteacher, made available by the local authority, provides valuable support and guidance to the acting headteacher and to governors. The capacity for sustaining improvement, therefore, is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Meet the expectations of governors and continue to improve progress in learning by:
 - making the format for lesson planning consistent throughout Years 1 to 6, to include precise objectives for learning and linked success criteria
 - sharpening the use of assessment information throughout the school in planning lessons made up of tasks that effectively challenge each child and pupil.

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

The small number of pupils and the small size of the classes mean that staff know the children and pupils well as learners and as young people. In Years 1 to 6, the system for assessing and recording progress is used well in recognising pupils who are 'on track' against their targets and those who stray 'off track'. For those who move 'off track' intervention strategies are quickly put in place, for example in terms of new 'specific' targets for learning; or through access to specialist support, for example a speech therapist. Consequently, even those who experience difficulties with learning continue to make good progress. Overall, pupils attain well against national expectations for their age. Each of the six pupils who left last year achieved Level 4 of the National Curriculum in English against a national expectation of 80%. Half of the leavers (50%) gained the higher Level 5 against an expectation of 29%. This positive picture is much the same for mathematics and science. In mathematics, all six gained Level 4 against the expectation of 79% and 75% achieved Level 5 against the expectation of 34%. In science they also did well, with 50% of leavers gaining level 5 against the national expectation of 43%. Nevertheless, even though the standards pupils attain and the progress they make are both good, they are constrained by lesson planning that does not always use assessment information well enough to make certain that learning experiences are always relevant to each pupil.

In a cohesive community with a 'family' feel pupils become confident as learners. They gain from the many opportunities they have to take part in the day-to-day running of the school, as class monitors, special helpers, register helpers, and as members of the school council. The links with the local community are very strong. The school is a focal point in village life, with pupils regularly taking a part in many village events, such as the festival. These close links are very much liked by parents and carers, many of whom attended the school themselves. The annual residential visit for pupils in Years 5 and 6 and the visits to Stratford and London to the theatre and museums, such as the War Museum, are very much enjoyed by pupils. Pupils show they understand the need to maintain a healthy life style through regularly eating the fruit that is available

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throughout the day and by their high take up in the after school sports clubs, such as the gymnastics and tennis clubs.

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 | 2 |
| 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?

In Years 1 to 6, classes can be made up of pupils over four different chronological years. The better progress seen by pupils at this inspection shows that they and their assistants are becoming more effective in meeting this challenge. However, planning for lessons tends to focus on year groups rather than on what pupils know and can do. Because of this, in a small number of lessons objectives for learning are not precise enough to match the learning needs of each pupil in the class and there is insufficient guidance on what they need to do to reach the next stage of their learning. This means that, even though progress is good overall, teaching and learning are not always completely effective in maximising pupils' learning and their rate of progress.

The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 to 6 provides a better balanced and wider range of learning experiences than was the case at the last inspection. Information and Communications Technology is now better formed as a subject and as a tool to support

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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learning in the other subjects. Locally, pupils have taken part in Thatching Week, an art exhibition in the church and village hall. Year 5 and 6 pupils attend the local high school one afternoon a week for a term to learn about science and design and technology. Pupils appreciate the good range of after school clubs, such as the gardening, art, pond building, drama and sports clubs, some of which are linked to an award from the Warwickshire Children's University. Pupils have opportunities to find out about those from different cultures, traditions, beliefs and about places different from their rural locality. For instance, the French Week, learning about Christmas in Spain from a Spanish pupil, how to play African drums and visits to places outside the local area. Children and pupils are quick to say they the school is like a 'big family' and they feel valued in welcoming and caring surroundings. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are always ready to have fun with themselves and with their adults. The friendliness of staff and pupils and the good arrangements for supporting and helping children and pupils result in a smooth and easy passage through school and onto the next school.

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 acting headteacher has fitted easily into her new role. She, and the consultant headteacher, are supported and challenged outstandingly well by the Chair of Governors and her colleagues. They have plans, and a time frame, to support their leaders in continuing to drive improvement so as to provide outstanding provision for their pupils. The Chair is clear that governors have the training, experience, energy and enthusiasm to help in achieving this. They, and the leaders, know the school very well and realise that precise planning for individualised learning is the key to promoting even better progress. The improved progress seen since the last inspection and the better match between the curriculum and pupils' learning needs shows the capacity for sustaining improvement is good.

Links with outside agencies, when required, provide valuable specific help and advice to staff, pupils and their parents and carers and contribute to each pupil having equal access all the school offers. The link with parents and carers is strong. Many bring their children to and from school and liaise with staff and the other children. Parents say they feel an integral part of the school. Through the open door policy, the newsletters, reports, the newly created website and termly consultations they know about matters to do with their own children, as well as those to do with the school itself. They especially

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appreciate the good guidance available to them, either as individuals or as members of a group, in helping their children with their learning at home. Safeguarding procedures are thorough as the school ensures it adopts good practice. Links with the immediate community are very strong as the school is a central element in village life. Links with other schools in the local cluster are well established and staff have especially benefited from taking part in the joint training programmes. National and international links are being established and pupils have a long history of supporting international charities, most recently the Haitian disaster fund.

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 | 1 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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

Leadership and management in the Early Years are good. Children quickly settle and like being there. Adults know the children well and make good use of this information in ensuring that all children gain well planned learning experiences. Teaching is routinely good and as the national skills based curriculum is followed, children gain a good balance of indoor and outdoor experiences. Also, the good balance of teacher led and children initiated experiences provides ample opportunities for them to explore learning for themselves. As they do, they gain the beginning skills of independent learning and the confidence that helps them to enjoy and be adventurous in their learning. As a result, children make good progress over all the early learning areas and are prepared well for their work in Year 1.

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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

Most parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire or spoke with the inspector were fulsome in their praise for the school. They especially liked that their children enjoy being at school and the 'family' feel of the school, including the way their children are known as individuals and the way staff look after and care for their children. A small number of parents feel their children do not make enough progress in their learning. The inspection judged that learning is better than was the case at the inspection and is good, overall. Some parents and carers are concerned about leadership of the school. The inspection found that the acting headteacher, who gains very strong support from the consultant headteacher and governors, has fitted effortlessly into her new role.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acorns 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 inspector received 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 48 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|----|-------------------|----|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 10 | 63 | 5 | 31 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 10 | 63 | 6 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 8 | 50 | 5 | 31 | 2 | 13 | 1 | 6 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 10 | 63 | 3 | 19 | 3 | 19 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 11 | 69 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 9 | 56 | 4 | 25 | 1 | 6 | 2 | 13 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 9 | 56 | 4 | 25 | 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) | 8 | 50 | 5 | 31 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 6 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 8 | 50 | 6 | 38 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 10 | 63 | 3 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 8 | 50 | 5 | 31 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 7 | 44 | 4 | 25 | 4 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 10 | 63 | 3 | 19 | 1 | 6 | 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 | 58 | 36 | 4 | 2 |
| Primary schools | 8 | 43 | 40 | 9 |
| Secondary schools | 10 | 35 | 42 | 13 |
| Sixth forms | 13 | 39 | 45 | 3 |
| Special schools | 33 | 42 | 20 | 4 |
| Pupil referral units | 18 | 40 | 29 | 12 |
| All schools | 11 | 42 | 38 | 9 |

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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.



15 September 2010

Dear Children and Pupils

Inspection of Acorns Primary School, Long Compton, CV36 5LA

It was lovely for me to meet and spend time with you when I visited your school. Thank you for making me so welcome. I found your school to be a good school. These are some of the things I especially liked:

- that you say you are safe and well cared for at school
- the good teaching and, because of this, the good progress you make in your learning
- that you are learning things that are right for you in helping prepare you well for the challenges of your next school
- that you know the importance of a healthy lifestyle and most of you make healthy choices most of the time
- the really good way in which your governors are working to help your leaders make your school even better.

There are two things I have asked your leaders to do to make your school better still. I want them to make sure your teachers use the assessment information they have on each of you to always plan lessons that have just the right amount of challenge for you; not too easy or too hard. I also want your teachers to use the same format for their lesson plans so that in each lesson it is easy for each one of you to know what you should be learning and how well you have done.

Of course, you can help too; by always behaving as well as you did over the time of my visit and by continuing to work hard all the time.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead inspector

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