

# Bishop Alexander Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	122592
<b>Local authority</b>	Nottinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380496
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Jeremy Spencer HMI

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>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	287
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Watson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Clive Richardson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 October 2008
<b>School address</b>	Wolsey Road Newark NG24 2BQ
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	25–26 January 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	380496



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Jeremy Spencer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stuart Ransom

Additional inspector

Lynn Brewster

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 22 lessons, taught by 11 teachers, and held meetings with groups of pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a variety of documents including: policies; minutes from meetings; data about pupils' progress; and the school improvement plan. Inspectors also scrutinised responses on 21 staff questionnaires, 121 from pupils and 96 from parents and carers.

## Information about the school

The school is larger than the average-sized primary school and moved into a purpose-built new building in 2008. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Most pupils at the school are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above the national average.

A daily breakfast club operates for pupils on the school site and is under the responsibility of the school's governing body. The school has achieved a number of accreditations, including the Activemark award and Healthy Schools status.

Results from the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2011 indicate that the school met current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. Over fifty percent of the teaching staff are new to the school within the last two years.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>3</b>

## Key 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 in relation to children’s achievement and the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2.

- Although there are a number of strengths in this school, its overall effectiveness is judged to be inadequate because the achievement of pupils at the school and the quality of teaching over time are judged to be inadequate.
- Pupils’ attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently low over the last three years. Despite some signs of improvement, the progress that pupils are currently making is still not good enough. Inspectors found that this is because there is not enough good or better teaching in the school, particularly in Key Stage 2.
- Pupils’ calculation skills are weak. The school has an appropriate calculation policy in place but it is not consistently well used by all members of staff.
- Reading books do not always present a suitable level of challenge for pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Although appropriate activities are planned and organised to develop children’s reading and writing skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage, boys do not access them frequently enough.
- Teachers do not assess pupils’ learning accurately, or provide constructive comments in pupils’ exercise books to help them move forward in their learning frequently enough.
- The quality of leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. Leaders and managers have taken a number of important steps to halt pupils’ falling achievement. These include reducing class sizes in some year groups and by strengthening the impact of the senior leadership team in tackling the school’s weaknesses. These actions are beginning to make a positive impact on pupils’ achievement but many are still at an early stage of development. School action

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plans and priorities are not always communicated clearly to staff. Senior leaders do not spend enough time monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in the school, supporting improvement of colleagues' practice or in analysing data to determine the levels of progress made by different groups of pupils.

- Attendance has improved from last year and is now above the national average.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school is satisfactory. However, there are some inconsistencies between classes, meaning that low-level disruption occurs in some lessons, which interrupts pupils' learning.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, by improving the quality of teaching across the school, so that at least 85% is consistently good or better by March 2013, by:
  - improving consistency in teachers' implementation of the school's calculation policy in mathematics in order to improve pupils' numeracy skills
  - ensuring that lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 have access to daily phonics sessions which are pitched accurately to meet their learning needs
  - matching reading books more closely to pupils' abilities in Key Stage 2
  - increasing the engagement of boys during both indoor and outdoor activities to develop their reading and writing skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage
  - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teachers' marking and their assessment of pupils' work and learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - increasing the proportion of time available for senior leaders to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the school
  - increasing the frequency of formal lesson observations undertaken by senior leaders, and provide more opportunities for colleagues across the school to see best practice
  - analysing assessment information about pupils' progress in greater depth, to determine whether gaps in their learning and achievement are closing between different groups of pupils across the school
  - ensuring that all action plans are shared with staff and clearly outline who will monitor and evaluate each action, with clear milestones and timescales from which to measure progress.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that all teachers deal effectively with any occasional low-level disruption in lessons.

**Main report**

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## Achievement of pupils

Pupils' achievement is inadequate because attainment at the end of Year 6 is consistently low and pupils do not make enough progress from their starting points, particularly in mathematics. Children begin in the school's Nursery demonstrating knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. They make satisfactory progress during their time in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection indicate that pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. Although pupils' attainment fluctuates from year-to-year, their attainment in reading at the end of Year 2, and overall attainment in English and mathematics are broadly average. Pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory.

Pupils' progress slows in Key Stage 2. This is reflected in their overall attainment by the end of Year 6, as national test results show, that it has been significantly below average for the last three years. Attainment in reading has been slightly below average. Some pupils have not made enough progress because they do not get opportunities to read books and texts that are challenging enough. Pupils in Key Stage 2 underachieve in mathematics because some pupils are not making enough progress in relation to their starting points at the end of Key Stage 1. However, there are signs of improvement. The most recent test results show that a higher proportion of pupils than the national average made the expected progress in English in 2011. Pupils in Years 2 and 3 have been grouped into smaller classes to receive more effective support and teaching. As a result, they are catching up on previously lost ground, particularly in mathematics. In addition, those pupils known to be eligible to receive free school meals are making better progress compared with previous years. Similarly, attainment gaps are also closing when comparing the performance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and other pupils. One parent of a child with special educational needs commented, 'My daughter has come on a long way and loves coming to school.' However, attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 is still too low and rates of progress vary too much across classes.

Most pupils enjoy learning. Lessons often begin with physical movement sessions, which take place to music in the classroom. This prepares the pupils well for learning and usually helps them to focus on the lesson ahead. The school's breakfast club also enables pupils to make a positive and healthy start to the day and during the inspection, pupils were observed chatting together and playing games.

Where effective teaching meets pupils' needs, pupils make good progress. For example, during one lesson in Year 4, pupils learned about how to write notes and then convert them into full sentences. Higher-ability pupils were encouraged to form extended sentences, and other pupils were appropriately supported and challenged by the task. The pace of learning was good and activities, including an exciting 'walk and talk' session to music, enthused and engaged pupils well. However, the pace of learning is much slower in other lessons, particularly when activities do not present appropriate challenge, or when occasionally low-level disruption is caused by pupils'

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inappropriate behaviour. Pupils' slower progress in reading has been compounded by a lack of daily lessons in phonics (the sounds that letters make) for lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 2, and because the books pupils are expected to read in Key Stage 2 do not routinely match their ability. Boys do not always get off to the best start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they do not access activities to develop their basic reading and writing skills frequently enough. Across the rest of the school, pupils have made slower progress in mathematics because calculation skills have not been taught consistently or effectively enough.

Responses to the inspection questionnaire suggest that almost all parents and carers believe that their child is making good progress at the school. The inspection found that although there are pockets of good progress being made by pupils, their overall achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, is inadequate.

### **Quality of teaching**

Although the school's monitoring records show that the quality of teaching is improving, there is insufficient good teaching to accelerate pupils' progress and make up for pupils' previous underachievement. Scrutiny of work in pupils' exercise books, discussions with pupils and the analysis of data about their achievement indicate that the quality of teaching over time is inadequate.

Teachers' skills in assessing the progress made by pupils are variable. Some teachers use assessment very well to determine how effectively individuals and groups of pupils make progress in lessons. This means that they plan the next lesson at just the right level for all pupils. This was particularly evident in a mathematics lesson in Year 6. The teacher provided a range of calculation exercises at the start of the lesson that were carefully matched to the abilities of different pupils. The teacher skilfully identified misconceptions during the activities and provided good support to pupils in addressing these. As a result, pupils of all abilities made good progress. Some teachers mark pupils work very effectively, providing constructive comments to help pupils move forward in their learning. Pupils often engage in a learning dialogue with these teachers, writing comments to the teachers about their progress and the level of challenge in their work. Teachers in turn respond very effectively to pupils' written comments and pupils say they value these highly because they help them to make progress. However, there are significant inconsistencies between classes in the quality of marking and in teachers' use of assessment. This results in too many pupils being unclear about the next small steps of learning they need to take to improve. The school has implemented longer-term targets for pupils and these are located into the front of pupils' exercise books. However, while some pupils are clear about their targets and what they mean, this is not consistently the case for all pupils.

Teaching effectively promotes the development of pupils' social skills. Most teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to work together in pairs and small groups – often as part of speaking and listening exercises. During these times, pupils usually work well together, listening to each other and valuing the opinions of others. Pupils'

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moral development is promoted well in classes when the school's behaviour policy is fully adhered to. Teachers have ensured that learning environments are stimulating and well-organised. 'Working walls' are well used in lessons to record information and support pupils' learning. Another positive feature of teaching is the sharing of learning objectives and success criteria with pupils at the start of each lesson. This helps to engage and focus pupils on the purpose of the lesson and the learning activities they will undertake.

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire believe that their child is taught well at the school. The inspection found that as a result of weak teaching over time, pupils currently in the school are making inadequate progress. There is however, evidence that the quality of teaching is beginning to improve in some classes. There are also pockets of good and outstanding teaching but these features are not embedded across the school in all classes.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The behaviour and safety of pupils in the school is satisfactory. Questionnaire responses and discussions with parents, carers, pupils and staff during the inspection, indicate that all of these groups are generally positive in their feelings about behaviour in the school over time. However, some concerns are expressed. Inspectors found that pupils' behaviour on the playground, in eating areas and at the school's breakfast club is satisfactory. Some pupils are disrupted in their learning during lessons on occasions due to the poor behaviour of a small minority of other pupils. This is not always tackled well enough by some staff. Some pupils have additional needs and present very challenging behaviour. The school deals with this behaviour sensitively and effectively in order to minimise the impact upon others. Discussions with a broad range of pupils indicate that bullying rarely occurs at the school, and when it does occur, it is tackled effectively by staff.

Pupils feel safe in school and say that, if they have a problem, adults are able to resolve it for them. Pupils demonstrate an appropriate understanding of what constitutes an unsafe situation. The school records racist incidents but these are extremely rare and effectively managed. Pupils have responded well to the school's systems to promote improved attendance. As a result, attendance has risen and is now above the national average.

### **Leadership and management**

The quality of leadership in and management of the school is satisfactory. Systems to safeguard the welfare of pupils are well understood by staff. The school's central record of suitability checks fully meets current government requirements. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. All statutory policies are in place and there is evidence that attainment gaps between different groups of pupils are beginning to close.

Leaders and managers acknowledge that pupils' achievement, particularly in Key

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Stage 2, requires improvement. The school has undergone many changes since the last inspection, including relocation to a new building and a significant turnover of staff. The management of these changes has, at times, distracted the attention of senior leaders away from monitoring and improving teaching and learning. This has been recognised by senior leaders. A number of systems have been put in place aimed at reversing the trend of underachievement, and there is evidence that the pace of learning and pupils' achievement is beginning to rise, particularly in mathematics. Teachers who are new to the school have brought many strengths, but these have not filtered through to support improvements in the practice of their colleagues across the school. Almost all parents and carers report that the school helps them to support their child's learning. Partnerships with other schools have helped to support the school's drive towards raising attainment.

Leaders and managers demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve the school. This is reflected in the improvements made to the teaching of English which have resulted in a higher than average proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress at Key Stage 2 in 2011. This was largely due to leaders and managers' implementation of a new target setting system which has helped teachers to focus their efforts on what pupils should achieve. Capacity to improve is further demonstrated by successes in raising pupils' attendance, improvements to the curriculum and the quality of the learning environment, and the ability to attract teachers and leaders of high calibre to the school. As a result, achievement is beginning to rise but not consistently across the school. The governing body understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and is becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the impact of the school's initiatives. Despite the strengths in leadership and management, some leaders do not currently have sufficient time to carry out their monitoring roles because of class or group teaching commitments. This means that too many opportunities are missed to monitor the quality of teaching across the school, and to demonstrate good and better teaching, in order to support improvements in colleagues' practice. Implementation of the school's initiatives, particularly the use of the calculation policy in mathematics, is not always consistent. This has caused pupils' achievement in mathematics to fall in Key Stage 2. However, in English, there is good consistency in the way in which letters and sounds (phonics) are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This is supporting stronger progress in English in these phases. Although tracking systems have recently been revised and are comprehensive, leaders do not spend enough time analysing the performance of different groups of pupils to gain a comprehensive understanding of their progress and the impact of the school's strategies to drive improvement. Although action plans are in place and accurately identify areas for improvement, they are not always shared with staff in enough detail. Monitoring arrangements do not always clearly outline who will be responsible for monitoring the impact of actions, and improvement plans lack specific timescales or milestones to ensure that evaluations of the school's progress are measured systematically.

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory. It has recently been revised, and improved and now provides better coverage of each subject. A number of lessons

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observed during the inspection were linked to the school's current 'inventions' topic and these were enjoyed by pupils. A broad selection of well-attended after-school clubs, including gardening, choir, football and pottery, support pupils' learning and spiritual experiences well. Pupils' cultural development is promoted effectively through an active link with a school in another country. The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



30 January 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Bishop Alexander Primary and Nursery School, Newark,  
NG24 2BQ**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to us when inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for talking to us, for filling in some questionnaires about your school and for being so polite and helpful. Your attendance at school has improved recently. This is excellent news - well done! You told us that you feel safe in school and that bullying is very rare. We noticed that most of you try really hard in your lessons. While there are many positive things about your school, there are times when some of you do not do as well as you could, particularly in Key Stage 2. This means that the school is not doing a good enough job and we have asked the headteacher, teachers and governors to make some urgent improvements. This is called a notice to improve. Another inspector will visit the school in the next year to see how well things are improving.

- We have asked your teachers to make sure that you are all taught to calculate numbers in mathematics in an agreed way, so that you do not get confused.
- We have asked that older children who are finding it hard to learn to read get daily lessons to help them, and that reading books for pupils in Key Stage 2 are checked to make sure that they are neither too easy nor too hard.
- We have asked that boys in the Early Years Foundation Stage take part in more activities to help them to learn to read and write more quickly.
- We have asked that teachers check your work more carefully to see how well you are learning and also to make sure that your books are marked really well.
- We have asked the school's leaders to spend more time helping teachers to get better at teaching. We have also asked them to share their plans more carefully with each other and check information about your progress in even more detail, to make sure that nobody falls behind.

You can help too by coming to school as often as you can, making sure that you behave to a high standard in all lessons, and trying your very best at all times. Thank you once again for helping us.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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