

Alanbrooke School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121326
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	358986
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Clive Petts

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Major Kevin Young
Headteacher	Mrs Keeley Ungerechts
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors visited six lessons and observed four class teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils, analysed 23 questionnaire responses from parents and carers and looked at questionnaires from staff and pupils. The inspectors also looked at development plans, pupils' progress and attainment data, documents relating to the safeguarding of pupils, school policies and plans for improving the quality of learning. They scrutinised pupils' current and past work and spoke to the School Improvement Partner to discuss her reports.

The inspectors reviewed many aspects of the school's work and looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The quality of learning and the progress made by all groups of pupils.
- How effectively the provision of care, guidance and support takes account of pupils' specific needs to ensure all make the most of opportunities in school.
- How well children's individual needs are identified and provided for in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that they can make faster progress in relation to their starting points.
- How effectively senior leaders have acted to achieve and sustain improvement.

Information about the school

Alanbrooke is a small school serving an isolated army barracks close to Thirsk. Almost all the pupils are children of army personnel, who spend extended periods on active service overseas. Consequently, families have long spells when they operate as single-parent or carer families. No child has attended the school longer than 10 terms following a regiment leaving to be replaced by another in 2008. A significant proportion of pupils join the school later than normal and move before the end of Year 6. Just over three-quarters of pupils are of White British heritage with the remainder Fijian, all of whom speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Very few pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has achieved the Investors in People and Basic Skills awards. The headteacher was appointed in September 2010.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Alanbrooke is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It provides outstanding care, guidance and support. Its exemplary warm, friendly environment makes a significant difference to the pupils' happiness, enjoyment of school life and their willingness to learn. As a result, most new pupils are able to settle quickly into school routines, no matter what time of the year they arrive or return. This includes those whose first language is not English. Pupils from diverse backgrounds, whose parents and carers are deployed overseas on active duty, receive excellent social and emotional support. One parent summed up the views of many by writing: 'The whole staff are always welcoming and supportive and my child sees school as a positive experience'.

The starting points of most children are broadly typical for their age, although some arrive with a disrupted pattern of education. By the end of Year 6, attainment is broadly average, although writing skills are underdeveloped. Since her appointment, the headteacher has successfully established a strong focus on raising pupils' achievement, regardless of their starting point or background. The positive action being taken is quickly accelerating pupils' rate of progress. Although overall progress is satisfactory, it is more rapid in Years 4, 5 and 6, and is now good. In lessons when pupils' good progress was observed, expectations were high, assessment information consistently used to match activities to abilities and needs and taxing targets set. Pupils were also provided with clear advice for improvement. In lessons where progress was slower, demands were not challenging enough. The curriculum is adapted well to meet the individual needs of pupils, including those potentially vulnerable pupils. Good enrichment opportunities are provided to stimulate learning, often in partnership with local schools, although not all opportunities are taken to reinforce basic skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those new to learning English also make satisfactory progress. From the time they arrive, pupils' personal development is good. Their enthusiasm is reflected in their outstanding commitment to taking responsibility for aspects of school improvement and playing an extremely active part in community activities and fundraising on the base, for example, raising money for the Help the Heroes charity.

The headteacher and the governing body have a clear and accurate grasp of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Improvement planning captures the key priorities to enrich learning. Robust monitoring systems are in place and strategies to analyse the impact of action taken are proving effective. The forward-thinking, ambitious governing body holds the school to account and adds to the improvement drive. Additionally, subject leadership is being systematically strengthened. A lot has been achieved in a short time. Consequently, the school has a good capacity for continuous improvement.

Up to 40% of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of pupils' progress in order to boost achievement and attainment, especially in writing, by:
 - raising the expectations of what all pupils can achieve in all lessons
 - ensuring that all pupils practise their literacy skills in all subjects
 - in all instances systematically providing pupils with clear guidance to help them improve.
- Raise the overall quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - making certain that there is a constant focus on raising achievement in all lessons
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to ensure challenging activities are well matched to all abilities and needs.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils are responding positively to the activities and tasks provided, as teaching and learning become sharply focused on making certain all pupils achieve well. Although their rates of progress are quickening, pupils' overall progress is satisfactory, because progress is uneven across age groups. This is confirmed by inspection evidence and the school's information about pupils' progress. Positive action to eliminate inconsistencies, for example, enhancing writing skills, is adding to the rate of pupils' progress. In the best practice, thinking is constantly challenged and probing questioning continually checks understanding, for example, working out the chances of the Prime Minister walking into the classroom. Current Year 6 pupils, who joined the school in Year 4, are on target to achieve at least the levels expected, although their attainment in writing remains a relative weakness. Although pupils can use modern technology very capably, they do not always present their work with sufficient thought and care.

The happy and supportive school environment ensures that all pupils feel safe and behave well. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and provides a strong focus on pupils considering the needs of others. They mix well, look after each other and respect difference. Pupils are happy, relaxed and report that there is no bullying. They thrive on the responsibilities they are given, for example, acting as 'playground protectors' and contributing to school improvement planning. They make a very strong contribution to life on the base and enthusiastically celebrate the diversity of their own community, for example, celebrating Fijian Day. Excellent use is made of modern technology to talk directly with pupils at a partner school in Wiltshire. Pupils very happily join in activities, such as football competitions with local village schools. They have a good grasp of the benefits of keeping fit, eating healthily and being safety conscious. Attendance is typically above average, although occasionally figures are affected by extended leave taken when a parent or carer returns from active service.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school's exceptional commitment to high-quality care provides a positive climate in which pupils can make at least satisfactory progress. It also ensures that pupils experience minimum disruption to their learning, whether newly arrived or returning after extended leave. Nearly all pupils have changed schools regularly, often within the school year. Excellent, well-coordinated work by the home school worker and other staff, ensure that the needs of pupils and their families quickly become known and are met fully. Pupils' all-round development is closely monitored, especially those who are potentially vulnerable, throughout their time in the school. This includes those newly arrived in the country whose first language is not English. Strong partnerships with specialist agencies, including the Army Welfare Service, provide pupils with the support they need.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, but with an increasing incidence of good teaching. When assessment information is used effectively, teaching builds on and extends pupils' learning. Consequently, progress accelerates. Positive relationships add to the harmonious climate for learning. In those lessons when the pace of progress is satisfactory rather than good, activities are not so finely tuned to meet the different needs of pupils. Teachers' over long input sometimes limits the available time for pupils to think for themselves and discuss their own ideas. On occasion, teachers do not use assessment to provide pupils with a clear sense of what they need to do to improve.

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The curriculum provides a good match to the pupils' personal needs and interests. The developing use of imaginative approaches is improving pupils' motivation to learn and adding to their enjoyment. This is helping to speed-up progress as teachers work together to develop even more approaches to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity. Increased opportunities are provided to embed their skills, although some inconsistencies remain. Activities designed to develop pupils' personal skills and to enhance their experiences are being systematically and quickly improved, for example, a residential experience in the Lake District and an educational visit to a Gurkha Hindu temple at the nearby Catterick Garrison. This provides pupils with more opportunities to add to their varied experiences.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The relentless drive and high ambition of the headteacher and the well-established governing body are playing a fundamental part in the school's rapid improvement. All staff and the governing body share a determination to provide the highest quality care and to promote pupils' better achievement. Consequently, the school has an exceptionally strong sense of community. The positive action taken to improve the quality of learning has rapidly accelerated pupils' progress but some inconsistencies remain. Staff confidence, skills and their talents are being effectively nurtured, in order to enable them to provide more inspiration in their teaching to capture pupils' interest. Relationships with parents and carers are good and they are increasingly involved in their children's learning and development. The good and strengthening range of links with the community on the base helps to enrich learning, for example, joining in bonfire night celebrations in the army mess. The increasingly close links with nearby schools are also improving the quality of learning and enhancing the curriculum.

The governing body plays a full and pro-active role shaping the direction of the school, such as when reinforcing their clear vision and ambition in their early planning for the appointment of the new headteacher. They are assured in their approaches to quality assurance checks. Rigorous monitoring and evaluation, now in place, informs improvement planning effectively. The school adopts good procedures and practice for safeguarding, which meet requirements and exemplify best practice to keep pupils safe. There is an effective commitment to ensure that all pupils are equally involved and to tackle discrimination. Its inclusive practice and improving rates of progress demonstrate the commitment to ensure that all pupils are able to fulfil their potential during their time at school. Community cohesion is well promoted and approaches ensure that all pupils can appreciate the diversity that exists in the world.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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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	2
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Most children arrive in Reception with skills broadly expected for their age, although speech and language skills are sometimes underdeveloped. Children make satisfactory progress to enter Year 1, with most working towards the goals expected of them. Most settle well because staff take great care to ensure they are effectively supported. Nevertheless, a few children do take time to settle into classroom routines. This is especially noticeable during adult-led sessions, for example, during carpet time. Staff place firm emphasis on developing early confidence and independence, for example, encouraging children to have a drink when they choose to. Children relate well to adults and develop friendships with their classmates.

Adults' questioning probes children's knowledge well and often prompts their curiosity, but demands made of their thinking are not always challenging enough. Opportunities for children to find out things for themselves are improving, both when inside and outside. Staff work hard to make learning active and enjoyable, but opportunities are not utilised fully to encourage children to explore and investigate. Initial letter sounds, letter and word recognition are well practised, for example, choosing the letters of a word so that they can 'cross the river'. However, not all tasks and activities are exploited enough to enable children to practise these skills in order to consolidate their early reading and writing.

Regular observations are recorded in each child's learning story and the assessment of children's development is becoming increasingly more focused and accurate. Positive contributions from parents and carers are included in their children's learning stories, although there is scope to exploit and share these family learning experiences even more. Leadership and management are satisfactory and improving as confidence grows and the school's aspirations continue to rise.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

Just under half of all parents and carers returned the questionnaire with their views of the school. This is a higher than average return. The views expressed were almost entirely positive about the quality of what the school provides and all indicated that their children are kept safe. Parents and carers spoke extremely highly of the school's friendly, welcoming atmosphere, and of the high-quality care and support their children receive. The inspection entirely endorses these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alanbrooke 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 52 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	12	52	9	39	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	48	12	52	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	10	43	13	57	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	9	39	14	61	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	57	10	43	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	10	43	10	43	3	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	35	14	61	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)	12	52	10	43	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	10	43	12	52	1	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	48	9	39	3	13	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	43	12	52	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	13	57	10	43	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	70	7	30	0	0	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 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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



9 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alanbrooke School, Thirsk, YO7 3SF

I want to thank you all for the very friendly welcome that you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. We really enjoyed our time talking to you all.

Alanbrooke is a satisfactory and quickly improving school, which has a number of strengths. We were pleased by your sensible behaviour and the exceptional care taken of you. You obviously feel safe and confident because of this. You understand well the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. You take great pride helping the school to improve and very enthusiastically join in activities on the base and with local schools. Some of you told us that your teachers make your learning interesting. Your school is taking positive action to improve and this can be seen in your faster progress, especially in Years 4, 5 and 6.

We have asked your headteacher, staff and the governing body to look at more ways of helping you to improve your work and for you to make faster progress. We want all your teachers to expect more of you in lessons and to make your work harder. For example, we have asked them to make sure that your writing skills are improved and used more frequently, which will help you achieve more. We have also asked that you are given clear and regularly help and advice as to how you can improve.

You can play your part by working as hard as you can. Thank you for helping with this inspection.

Best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Mr Clive Petts

Lead inspector

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