

Alvechurch, Crown Meadow First

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116646
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	290576
Inspection dates	22–23 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Parry
Headteacher	Janette Morris
Date of previous school inspection	21 October 2002
School address	Tanyard Lane Alvechurch Birmingham B48 7LN
Telephone number	0121 4454540
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Crown Meadow is an average-sized school, and the great majority of children are of White British origin. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Pupils come from an area where the socio-economic circumstances are above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is below average. Pupils' levels of skills on entry to Reception vary between around those expected for their age and above average. The headteacher was appointed to the school a little over two years ago.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

'We feel privileged that our child has received educational provision of a good standard. Our child's class teacher sets high expectations of learning and behaviour. The school provides quality teaching ... by being creative, flexible, open and warm.' This accurate endorsement of the good quality of education the school provides is typical of the appreciation shown by many parents. Good teaching and learning have resulted in significantly above average standards in English, mathematics and science over several years. Pupils achieve well, enjoy school and have positive attitudes to learning. The good curriculum is another contributory factor to pupils' success. They particularly relish the high level of challenge the school has introduced to develop their thinking skills and independent learning. They also enjoy the numerous opportunities they have to contribute to the school and wider community, especially in relation to taking care of the environment. Pupils feel proud that they are setting a good example for all residents in the village.

The school continues to improve further. Standards in writing, which were a relative weakness, are improving due to the strategies the school has put in place. However, pupils' writing in lessons like science is not as fluent as it is in English lessons. Achievement in mathematics, a priority for improvement this year, is now a strength of the school, especially when teachers ensure it presents a high level of challenge. Whilst achievement in science is good overall, occasionally, the most able pupils are not challenged enough when carrying out investigative work. Advice to pupils on how to improve their work is inconsistent. Often, the marking and feedback is perceptive and detailed, and shows them what they need to improve in order to reach their targets. However, this is too inconsistent across the school.

Pupils' personal development is good and is a result of the good quality of care, support and guidance provided by the school. It is a key factor in the development of pupils' self-esteem, especially for the small minority whose difficult behaviour is managed sensitively and well. Pupils feel safe, because any small disruptions are handled swiftly and effectively, and they are very aware of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. Their good academic and social skills prepare them well for the next stage of education.

The school's strengths are a consequence of the good quality of leadership and management. The headteacher maintains high expectations, and her innovative leadership is encouraging staff to provide a higher level of challenge for pupils. She is supported well by an enthusiastic team of staff and by excellent governors, who monitor the work of the school very well. Good leadership and provision in Reception ensure children make good progress. The quality of subject leadership is improving rapidly as a result of well planned staff development and mutual support. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of pupils' writing in subjects other than English.
- Increase the level of challenge for the most able pupils when they carry out investigations in science.
- Ensure that all teachers provide good guidance to pupils to help them improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well. For a number of years standards in English, mathematics and science have been significantly above average. Most pupils meet or exceed their challenging targets. Pupils get off to a good start from their broadly average starting points in Reception. By the time they enter Year 1, most pupils have levels of skills higher than those expected for their age. Pupils' speaking, listening and social skills are especially well developed.

In Years 1 to 4, standards in writing have been lower than in other areas, especially for more able pupils. Recently introduced strategies are improving the quality of handwriting. The organisation and content of the written work of the most able pupils in literacy lessons is also improving. However, these skills are not applied consistently when pupils write in other subjects. There have also been significant improvements in work on calculation in mathematics. Pupils tackle complex problems with confidence and enjoyment. This confidence has been supported by the attention the school is giving to developing pupils' ability to tackle problem solving independently. When working on scientific investigations, the progress made by the most able pupils is occasionally limited because the activities are insufficiently demanding. Pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress, because of well organised provision.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Good personal development and well-being contribute to the development of pupils' self-esteem. Pupils enjoy the activities the school provides, especially when they present a high level of challenge. Attendance is good. Pupils feel safe and behave well, except on the few occasions when work does not fully engage their attention. Occasionally, pupils with behavioural needs find it difficult to behave well, but they are dealt with effectively. Pupils speak with pride about influencing what goes on in the school and wider community with their contributions to the school council and eco committee. For example, they work on cutting down on waste packaging for school lunches and recycle textiles. Pupils develop good basic, social and team working skills which will help their future well-being. They clearly understand the importance of fitness and healthy living. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a good knowledge of the major religions and cultures of the world, but their understanding about living together with different cultures is not as well developed.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Despite recent staff turnover, good teaching is a major contributory factor to the good progress pupils make. From Reception onwards, work is well planned, taking good account of pupils' needs. Pupils respond by working with concentration and commitment. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to provide support to those who need it. Good relationships ensure that pupils are confident in contributing to class and paired discussions and are not frightened to try, even if they fail. The small number of excellent lessons, especially in numeracy, are characterised by shrewd questioning which challenges pupils to solve complex problems independently, using a range of strategies of their choice. They rise to the high level of challenge

with alacrity and enjoyment. In contrast, in a few science lessons, questions asked of the most able pupils lack challenge. In the small minority of weaker lessons, where pupils spend too long listening to the teacher, they occasionally lose concentration. Teachers insist on high standards in writing in English lessons, but do not consistently apply these same high standards for writing in other subjects. Some marking is excellent and provides guidance that leads to rapid improvement, especially in literacy. However, in a minority of lessons marking is regular and positive, but does not provide guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A good quality curriculum, which is well matched to pupils' needs, contributes to pupils' enjoyment of their learning. The introduction of thinking skills is beginning to provide pupils with an even higher, but realistic, level of challenge. Literacy skills are developed well in English lessons, but are not yet developed consistently across the wider curriculum. There is a very strong emphasis on the environmental curriculum. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about how they are improving the school environment. Pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship are developed well by the school. Children in the Foundation Stage are offered a good range of activities, which have a strong influence on the good achievement they make. A good range of out of school activities for older pupils, including a residential session in Year 4, have a positive effect on their academic and social development. There are fewer activities for younger pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support provided for pupils are good and make a significant contribution to the good progress made. Child protection and health and safety procedures are first rate. Suitability checks made on adults are robust. Pupils say that bullying is rare but when it does occur it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. The use of academic targets is satisfactory. In some classes, teachers use academic targets effectively to help pupils to improve their work. However, some pupils are not clear about their targets and how to achieve them. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well cared for and achieve well. There are strong links with outside agencies including the school nurse.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff ensure that pupils achieve well and that pupils' personal development is good. Strongly led by the headteacher, the school is closely focused on raising standards even further by developing pupils' thinking skills and independent learning. Planning is good and is based on an accurate evaluation of the work of the school. The headteacher is robustly supported by an effective team. Leadership of Reception is good and well organised provision results in pupils making good progress. Subject leadership is improving rapidly, but remains somewhat uneven. Governors provide a very high level of support and challenge. They monitor the work of the school extremely well. Most parents are strongly supportive, but a small minority would like more effective communication with the school. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good and the school has good capacity to improve further.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you very much for making us so welcome. You made our time at your school very enjoyable. We enjoyed meeting with some school council members and a number of other children who gave us their views of the school. The information you gave us was very helpful. From the comments you made, I am sure you will agree that yours is a good school.

- The best things about your school are:
- You achieve well overall, especially in mathematics, which many of you love, particularly when it is really difficult!
- The standards you reach in English, mathematics and science are well above average.
- You are beginning to use the TASC wheel well to help you solve problems.
- Teaching is good and is sometimes excellent, especially in mathematics!
- The headteacher provides good leadership and all other staff provide her with good support.
- Governors do an excellent job and keep a close eye on how well you are doing.
- As you go through school you develop into caring and respectful young people, and know how to stay healthy.
- You are very responsible in looking after the environment.
- The curriculum the school provides for you is interesting and you enjoy your work.
- Adults in school take good care of you and there is always someone to talk to when you have a problem.
- We are suggesting to your school that governors and staff should now:
- Help you to improve the quality of your writing in subjects like science and history.
- Make sure that work is difficult enough for the most able ones amongst you when you are doing investigations in science.
- Make sure that you always get good advice on how to improve your work and reach your targets.

As you grow older, we hope you will continue to enjoy your learning as much as you do now.