

Alderman Knight School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115825
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	312070
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Michael Farrell

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Twining
Headteacher	Clare Steel
Date of previous school inspection	31 March 2003
School address	Ashchurch Road Tewkesbury GL20 8JJ
Telephone number	01684 295639
Fax number	01684 295639

Age group	4-16
Inspection date	7 November 2007
Inspection number	312070

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

After a period of considerable uncertainty concerning the school's future, numbers of pupils declined, but they have risen rapidly now the uncertainty has been removed. Pupils have statements for autistic spectrum disorder and moderate and additional learning difficulties, and a smaller number have complex needs, severe learning difficulties and speech and language difficulties. Attainment on entry is exceptionally low compared with that expected nationally of pupils of the same age. Most pupils come from the local area. The school shares a campus with mainstream primary and secondary schools and provides an 'in-reach' service for pupils from other schools and an outreach service. There are twice as many boys as girls. Almost all pupils come from a White British ethnic background. The school currently has no pupils in the Foundation Stage. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in post for one year, and a new senior leadership team was formed in April.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Alderman Knight School is a good school with outstanding features. Parents deeply appreciate what the school provides, stating, for example, "It is a fantastic school and has helped my child to have happy, secure and excellent learning," and saying of the school, 'We are fully committed to it.' The school has passed through difficult times during which its future was unsure. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher and the very strong support of senior staff have enabled the school to make an excellent start in re-establishing itself. Providing outreach services to local schools, which enhance provision considerably, is an example of the school's outstanding partnership with others.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because the care, guidance and support they receive are excellent. In an atmosphere where they are greatly encouraged and valued and where there are rich opportunities to understand other cultures, pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is outstanding. Because the school encourages physical activity and healthy eating, pupils follow healthy lifestyles. Pupils feel very safe and act with great consideration for others because they know the school values them. Because the school strives to make learning interesting, pupils greatly enjoy their education and participate in what it offers enthusiastically. Excellent behaviour is successfully supported by high expectations and the very skilful handling of any difficult behaviour when it occasionally occurs. Pupils take great pride in their school, and contribute outstandingly well to it and to the local community. Pupils' attendance is good and they develop workplace and related skills well.

Pupils progress well throughout the school and achieve well because teaching is good and because support is of a very good quality. Many older pupils progress exceptionally well and achieve a range of qualifications, including General Certificate of Education (GCSEs) and Entry Level Certificates. Pupils reach challenging targets for achievement set by the school.

Good teaching ensures pupils' good progress, and some teaching is outstanding. Among strengths of teaching are the excellent relationships and the good deployment of teaching assistants, who make a valuable contribution. Lessons are well planned and questioning is used very well to extend pupils' learning. The good curriculum has particular strengths in the cross-curricular links made between subjects and in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. Recent important improvements to the curriculum have ensured it is now responsive to younger pupils' needs.

The school sets effective targets for improvement. Induction of new staff and newly qualified teachers is thorough and well planned. Changes made in the last year have had an outstanding impact in improving progress in Key Stages 1 and 2. These demonstrate that the school now has an excellent capacity to improve further. It has identified that very small steps of progress for pupils working at the lowest levels of attainment are not securely recorded, and that improving this will provide opportunities to monitor progress even more closely and further refine provision. Governors have been extremely supportive of the school through difficult times and have shown great commitment. This has led to governors paying less attention to their formal monitoring role, which they now recognise is a priority.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 9

At the time of the inspection, no children were taught as part of the Foundation Stage.

What the school should do to improve further

- Securely record small steps of progress for pupils working at the lowest levels of attainment.
- Refocus governors onto the more formal aspects of their monitoring responsibilities.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils enter the school with attainment far lower than expected for pupils of a similar age because of their special educational needs. Overall standards remain exceptionally low, but pupils now make good progress throughout the school and achieve well; many older pupils make exceptional progress, with some reaching typical standards for their age in some subjects. The progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 has shown rapid improvement this year. Impressive displays of work throughout the school testify to the achievements of pupils, for example, in art and in design and technology. The good range of accreditation, including GCSEs, Entry Level Certificates and Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) awards, is well matched to what pupils have previously achieved.

There is no evidence of different rates of progress for different groups of pupils – for example, boys and girls and pupils with different types of special educational needs. New pupils fit into school quickly and progress as well as others because of the school's excellent arrangements for induction. The challenging targets are adjusted as necessary to ensure they continue to stretch pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding in every respect because of the excellent ethos and support the school offers. For example, a pupil stated, 'I didn't mix well before coming here and now I go out all the time.' Pupils greatly enjoy and participate keenly in physical activities; they know about healthy eating and very often eat healthily because the school encourages this. They feel very safe and secure and behave with great consideration towards others. Their confidence increases because in lessons and elsewhere the school conveys very clearly that what they say is listened to and valued.

Their excellent behaviour, encouraged by the high expectations of staff, shines through in lessons and around the school, where they are engagingly polite and considerate. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and take great pride in it, saying, for example, 'I love coming to this school.' Their contribution to the community includes participating fully in school council and local activities and they benefit from a wide variety of visits, visitors and outside activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching ranges from satisfactory to outstanding but overall is good. For example, in a good mathematics lesson on fractions for pupils aged 13 to 14, relationships were excellent, tasks were well structured and the pupils' individual work developed well out of the teacher's earlier explanations. Potentially disruptive behaviour of one pupil was managed very well and the pupil was soon engaged in the lesson. Staff know individual pupils very well and this is supported by careful records of pupils' relative strengths and weaknesses and strategies for encouraging

their best behaviour. This leads in the best lessons to tasks being very precisely matched to individual pupils and groups of pupils.

In the school as a whole, general strengths of teaching and learning include: the excellent relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff; the good deployment and very strong contribution of teaching assistants; some very good questioning that extends knowledge and understanding; and tasks that capture the interest of pupils. Among particularly strong subjects are art, and design and technology. However, opportunities to encourage and develop manual signing to aid communication are not always seized.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum provides a good range of activities. A great deal of work has been done on the curriculum for younger pupils, which was previously rigidly subject orientated. It is now much more appropriately planned to match the way young children need to learn and to be responsive to their interests. Good schemes of work lead to well-structured and interesting lessons. Links across the curriculum are very skilfully planned and developed; for example, in a food technology lesson mathematics skills were very well emphasised in preparing the ingredients, in setting the heat required and in timing the cooking. Tutor time is used very well to provide interesting activities, for example, to raise awareness of news and current affairs, and personal, social, health and citizenship education makes a valuable contribution to pupils' excellent personal development. However, the changing special educational needs of pupils coming into the school present a continuing challenge to curriculum planning, and so curriculum development remains an ongoing school priority. Extra-curricular activities are very well supported, with a wide range of activities, including residential opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by the school includes the excellent process and procedures for new pupils entering the school; these enabled the school to very effectively admit a large number of pupils last year when the school's future was confirmed to be secure. The ethos of the school is calm and caring, creating an atmosphere in which pupils benefit from the excellent relationships and thrive personally and socially. Breaktimes and lunch periods are happy times when the pupils relax and socialise or pursue chosen activities.

Individual education plans are very well considered and clear and provide useful targets for pupils. Furthermore, the pupils are helped to understand their targets and what they need to do to improve. Strong arrangements are in place to help ensure pupils' safety, including vetting procedures for staff, and child protection procedures are robust.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

In a period of uncertainty about the school's future, with declining pupil numbers followed by a rapid increase, senior staff have shown great commitment to the school. The headteacher has shown outstanding leadership, making an excellent start, not only in putting the school back on the map but also in significantly improving the progress of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2; in this she has been very effectively supported by a very committed senior staff team. The

school deploys its resources well, for example, using teaching assistants very effectively and ensuring opportunities for staff training support the school's aims. It has a very clear sense of direction, which is leading to very rapid improvements where they are needed. Clear targets are set that are suitable and realistic, and the school then mobilises its resources well to achieve them. For example, the recent rapid progress of the younger pupils is the result of the ongoing developments to the curriculum in Key Stages 1 and 2 that have been supported by a carefully planned reduction in teaching group size. This has enabled more individual attention and better targeted work, with a strong impact both on basic skills and pupils' confidence.

The school's self-evaluation procedures are rigorous and in its judgements about its own performance, the school's views were very close to those of the inspectors. The headteacher and senior leadership team are searching in their analysis of how the school could improve. However, two aspects of the school's monitoring are not as strong. The school intends to further refine its monitoring of pupils' progress, because very small steps of progress are not securely recorded. The hard-working governors have provided very committed support to the school over turbulent times and their help was crucial to the school. During that time, much of the focus was on the school's survival and their formal monitoring of the school's performance to hold the school to account has not always been sufficiently to the forefront.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	3
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

9 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Alderman Knight School, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 8JJ

It was a delight to meet you when my colleague Alan Jones and I recently inspected your school. Thank you for the help you gave us.

We think your school is good and has many strengths. You are making good progress. You are courteous and thoughtful and your behaviour is excellent. The school cares for you and supports you extremely well. Mrs Steel has led the school very well and she has been very well supported by the staff. The school has excellent links with others to help you learn better.

There are a couple of things that the school could do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- Make sure that for those of you whose progress may be in very small steps, these steps are carefully recorded and the records used.
- Make sure governors check what the school achieves in a more formal way.

Thank you again for the kindness you showed to Alan and me.

Every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Farrell Lead inspector



9 November 2007

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Alderman Knight School, Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire GL20 8JJ

It was a delight to meet you when my colleague Alan Jones and I recently inspected your school. Thank you for the help you gave us.

We think your school is good and has many strengths. You are making good progress. You are courteous and thoughtful and your behaviour is excellent. The school cares for you and supports you extremely well. Mrs Steel has led the school very well and she has been very well supported by the staff. The school has excellent links with others to help you learn better.

There are a couple of things that the school could do even better so I have asked the staff to:

- Make sure that for those of you whose progress may be in very small steps, these steps are carefully recorded and the records used.
- Make sure governors check what the school achieves in a more formal way.

Thank you again for the kindness you showed to Alan and me.

Every good wish for your future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael Farrell'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a long, sweeping underline.

Michael Farrell
Lead inspector