

# Alvaston Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112743
<b>Local Authority</b>	City of Derby LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	316490
<b>Inspection dates</b>	5–6 December 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Cook HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	337
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Paul Mellor
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Susan Penglase
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 March 2006
<b>School address</b>	Elvaston Lane Alvaston Derby DE24 0PU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01332 571321
<b>Fax number</b>	01332 571321

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The number of children who attend Alvaston is above the average for similar schools. A distinctive feature of the school is the Enhanced Resource Facility (ERF) that caters for up to 22 children with statements of special educational needs. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of children from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of those whose first language believed not to be English are below average. Children who join the school in Year 3 have a range of abilities but overall standards are average.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Alvaston Junior School has improved since the last inspection and is now providing children with a satisfactory education. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Children enjoy school. They recognise the changes that have taken place and know that the school is improving. Their appropriate behaviour and sound attitudes in lessons and around school reflect their satisfactory personal development. The care and support all children receive is good and creates a friendly and safe atmosphere around school. The school's ERF is effective. Teaching in the ERF classrooms is good because teachers and teaching assistants make sure there are high expectations and that work is finely tuned to children's specific needs. The work connected to the ERF and the school's general inclusive approach means that there is a focus on valuing children and meeting their individual needs.

The staff of the school work as an effective team that demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to build on its success. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have successfully stuck to the task of improving the school following its last inspection. Other key staff have joined them over the last eighteen months. They have taken on leadership roles that are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Governors, who are providing good support and challenge, monitor the school's progress thoroughly and contribute to the school's accurate self-evaluation of its effectiveness.

Teaching is satisfactory with a growing proportion of good and outstanding lessons being taught. When teaching is most effective, all children are challenged and given work that will help them make at least good progress. Children do not always fully understand their academic targets. Too often they are unsure of what their target means and how often they will have their progress checked.

The progress children make is satisfactory. Standards measured by tests at the end of the summer were below average but there is clear evidence that they are rising because children's achievement is now back on track. Some more able children are not achieving as well as they should and do not reach the above average level 5 by the end of Year 6. Standards in writing are too low. Children are not given enough opportunities to write at length to put into practice the skills they have learnt.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Further develop the use of academic targets so that children can understand them more easily and have their progress checked more regularly.
- Increase the proportion of children that achieve above average standards
- Make sure children have more opportunities to apply their improving writing skills in extended pieces of written work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Children make satisfactory progress in lessons because teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. While there is still a legacy of underachievement from the past, improved achievement is closing the gap between national standards and those attained by the children at Alvaston. Standards currently are below average by Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. Staff provide good support for children who need extra help with their learning so that they make good progress towards their targets. The proportion of children gaining the higher level 5 in English, mathematics and science has risen but is still below average. However, the school's increased focus on identifying children that are more able is leading to extra support to encourage them to attain the higher levels. Writing standards still lag a long way behind those in reading and the school is working hard to redress the balance. The school is developing children's language satisfactorily through a stronger focus on speaking and listening and extensive planning before they get around to writing. While there is clear evidence of children learning the mechanics of writing like spelling, punctuation and grammar, there is less evidence of them being given the opportunity to use this knowledge in writing at length. The school has set challenging targets for the future and most children are on course to meet them.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. They have many opportunities to reflect quietly as in a very good assembly on the theme of light. Nearly all children behave satisfactorily. However effective support helps the few who find it hard to always behave appropriately, to cope in school. Children say that staff deal with any small amount of bullying and racist behaviour rigorously. Children have a satisfactory understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. For example, they participate in physical education and after school sports clubs and staff help them to understand the safety procedures for cycling. The school council is very active and members say 'we make things happen' like getting the outdoor climbing frame the 'trim trail' in the school grounds. There are good opportunities for children to take responsibility around the school and increasing involvement in the wider community. Children enjoy learning about a wide range of cultures, such as Aboriginal artists and most enjoy their lessons. Children's growing grasp of basic literacy and numeracy and developing social skills ensure they are satisfactorily prepared for later life.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and have improved since the last inspection with a growing proportion of good and outstanding lessons. Most lessons are characterised by good relationships, effective behaviour management, good use of interactive whiteboards and consistent use of learning objectives to help children know what they need to learn and achieve.

In the best lessons all abilities are catered for well. For example, in one outstanding lesson observed, excellent questioning skills and good learning strategies and activities added the extra spark to motivate and enthuse children in equal measure to produce excellent results.

In a few lessons teachers spend too much time talking to children, preventing them getting on with written tasks. As a result, some pieces of work are short and unfinished. Teachers' planning has improved and work is pitched at the right level for most pupils. Higher ability pupils however are not always challenged and there are too few opportunities for them to work at higher levels. Teaching Assistants provide good support for children with a wide range of special educational needs.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

The satisfactory curriculum is enriched by a good array of trips and visitors to enhance learning and personal development. These give children some exciting first hand experiences. The recent 'learning to learn' lessons are helping to stretch children's thinking skills and learning techniques effectively. The curriculum for those children in the ERF is very well matched to their needs especially during the morning lessons. Children's literacy skills are being developed in a satisfactory manner but they do not use writing skills widely across different subjects.

The school was recently awarded 'The Active Award' for the good range of clubs and other extra curricular activities, which many pupils enjoy. Participation rates are high and clubs include many sports and the arts. Participation in the locally famous Makaton Signing Choir increases pupils' self-esteem and enjoyment.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 3**

The school provides a good level of care and support for all children, especially those in the ERF. Relationships between staff and children are good and children confirm that they would readily seek help if they felt at risk.

Procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of children, including child protection, are good so children feel safe. The routine health and safety checks for the building and site are satisfactory. The school works very well with relevant external agencies to provide specialist help and advice for pupils with very complex emotional, behavioural and medical needs.

The school collates a great deal of information about children's progress and this is used effectively to identify which children are underachieving so that extra support can be well directed. However, this information is not always used well enough to set effective individual targets for improvement. For instance, some literacy targets use technical language which children find hard to understand. Children have asked for clearer targets and for regular reviews to measure their progress more effectively.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are an effective partnership that have effectively dealt with, and overcome some significant challenges, such as inadequate teaching, over the last two years. These challenges, have at times, slowed the rate of progress the school has made. However their determined focus on improvement has made the difference. The impact of the work of key staff, appointed recently, on improving teaching and learning is gaining momentum. Staff morale is high and team work is developing.

Subject co-ordinators are now effectively improving teaching and learning by checking on the quality of teaching and the work that children produce. In most cases, the feedback given to teachers is helpful but at times lacks robustness in the way challenges are made and expectations shared. The relatively new co-ordinator and deputy co-ordinator for special educational needs are effectively ensuring that specialist provision increasingly meets the very specific needs of individual children. For example, they have given the team of teaching assistants effective direction and support, which has led to improvements in the use of teaching resources in lessons.

Governors have improved the way they find out about how well the school is doing and effectively challenge the leadership when areas of concern are raised. Governors visit the school, observe teaching and learning and share their findings with the school and the rest of the governing body.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
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	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

7 December 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of Alvaston Junior School, Derby, DE24 0PU

I am writing to explain what happened at our recent visit to your school. It is good news! Your school has improved and your lessons are helping you learn and make progress. The hard work of all the adults in your school has made this happen. You too have helped because you enjoy school and in many lessons you try your hardest. One of the things that impressed us was the way your school makes sure that if you sometimes find it hard to behave or if you find learning difficult you get special care and help. We were also impressed by the work of the school council and the number of clubs you get to choose from.

Although your school has improved, there is still work to do to make sure it keeps on improving. We have asked your headteacher to focus on three key areas:

- Make sure you understand the targets you are given and know when you will get your progress checked. You need to tell your teacher if you do not understand your target or when you think you have achieved them.
- Give more of you even harder work so that more children achieve level 5 in their key stage two SATs. If Level 5 is your target, work hard and be confident.
- We thought your writing is improving but we have asked your teachers to give you many chances to write extended pieces of work.

Best wishes

Andrew Cook HMI