

Aston Lodge Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106888
Local Authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	324479
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Fiona Gowers

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	210
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs M Baden-Pancek
Headteacher	Mrs H Turner
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Lodge Lane Aston Sheffield South Yorkshire S26 2BL
Telephone number	0114 2872432
Fax number	0114 2876997

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	4–5 June 2009
Inspection number	324479

© Crown copyright 2009

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

This average size primary school serves an area with some economic and social disadvantage. The proportion of pupils entitled to a free school meal is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few are new to learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Early Years Foundation Stage provision consists of a Nursery and a Reception class. The headteacher and a significant proportion of the teaching staff joined the school in the period following the previous inspection.

The school has received the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Activemark, Healthy Schools Advanced Status and Artsmark Silver Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Aston Lodge is a good school. It is popular with parents, who typically comment that their 'children love coming to school, as they are seen as individuals.' Pastoral support for pupils is first rate and pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils greatly enjoy their time at school, as shown by their good attendance and they develop the skills to take a great deal of initiative in contributing to school life. They work very well with others in teams, for example, when taking the lead on the renovation of the school wildlife area and the development of their 'Global Garden'. In addition, pupils successfully obtained funding from a local retailer towards the projects. This school provides many opportunities that prepare pupils well for the next stage in their education.

From generally below expected starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, children make good progress to reach broadly average standards when they start Year 1. They continue to make good progress in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, reaching above average standards by the time they leave Year 6. The school sets challenging targets and these are generally met. The most recent Year 6 national test results confirm that the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in English, mathematics and science is above average.

Pupils achieve well because they receive good quality teaching and academic guidance and the curriculum effectively meets their needs. Very positive relationships with teachers and teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' achievement. As a result, pupils are keen to please, develop very positive attitudes to learning and their behaviour is exemplary. Most lessons are well structured and have a clear focus. In the best lessons, staff have high expectations and pupils rise to the challenge. A good variety of different learning activities interest and motivate pupils to work hard and they are given clear guidance on how to improve their work further. For example, in a series of lessons focused on helping pupils to write their own stories based in an imaginative setting, pupils made animated films, took digital photographs and used films and books as a stimulus for their writing. However, in a few lessons teachers' expectations are lower and learning activities lack the same degree of interest and challenge. This means that more-able pupils, in particular, do not always reach the standards of which they are capable in all classes. In addition, the quality of teachers' marking is inconsistent and does not always inform pupils about how well they are doing or provide clear guidance on how to improve further. The good quality curriculum places priority on pupils' basic numeracy and literacy skills. It is enriched by a good range of visits, visitors and extra-curricular activities and supports pupils' personal development particularly well. As a result, pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy.

Leadership and management are good. School leaders, including governors, have a clear view of school improvement. Planning identifies the right priorities and this has led to good achievement and effective improvement since the last inspection. However, plans do not always describe the intended outcomes. This can make it difficult for school leaders, staff and governors to check that their work is always having the desired impact on the school's performance and to ensure that the highest standards are promoted throughout. The school places strong emphasis on inclusion and care for pupils and takes effective action to meet the needs of individuals. Given the improvements made and the strengths in leadership, the school demonstrates it has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

When they start the Nursery children's skills are often below those expected for their age, although there is a wide spread of ability. Children settle very well in the happy and stimulating environment. Welfare arrangements are excellent and meet requirements. The very strong partnership with parents is enhanced by the weekly 'Stay and Play' sessions, enjoyed by parents and children alike. The provision for keeping safe and healthy is a key strength, as children learn how to lead a healthy lifestyle and grow and eat their own vegetables. Children make good progress and generally reach expected standards when they join Year 1. This is because they receive good quality teaching and are motivated to learn by the range of fun learning activities. For example, children worked with enthusiasm to order, buy and sell 'ice-creams' and confidently described seaside items for others to identify. Leadership and management are good and there has been a significant improvement in the quality of the outdoor learning environment. Careful assessments mean learning activities are well matched to children's needs and interests. The committed staff team ensure learning activities stretch and challenge children. Parents are very supportive of all the Early Years Foundation Stage has to offer, typically commenting: 'I am looking forward to my child's future at Aston Lodge, as their first two years have been such an enjoyable experience for both myself and my child.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best, especially with regard to the effectiveness of marking and the level of challenge provided for more-able pupils.
- In planning for improvement, sharpen the focus of success criteria for monitoring the success of initiatives.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Standards can fluctuate a little from year-to-year, because of the differing starting points of small numbers taking the national tests and assessments. However, all groups of pupils generally make good progress relative to their starting points. Following a trend of broadly average standards at the end of Year 2, school data confirms that standards have risen in mathematics and reading, due to the success of whole-school initiatives. In the 2008 national tests, standards at the end of Year 6 were above average. In these tests, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 was above average in English, mathematics and science and the school's challenging targets were met. However, school data and work in pupils' books confirm that more-able pupils in some classes do not do as well as they could, because they are not always challenged enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those new to learning English, make good progress throughout school. This is because they receive well-structured support and very positive relationships help them grow in confidence.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They grow in confidence in the school's strong nurturing ethos. Pupils are extremely polite, friendly and well behaved. They show great care and concern for others and readily take on positions of responsibility, for example, becoming a 'buddy reader' or 'cub reporter'. Attendance is above average and the

school is working hard to ensure this trend continues. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. They greatly enjoy tasting a range of healthy foods from different countries, swimming in the school's pool, and taking part in numerous sporting activities with a high degree of success. Pupils benefit greatly from the school's strong link with a school in Kenya. For example, following visits of staff between the two schools, pupils discovered that the school in Kenya grew much of their own food. This inspired them to develop their own 'Global Garden' to encourage others to have a healthy lifestyle and also to raise funds by selling the produce. Numerous opportunities to work with others in a team and their good basic skills, prepare pupils well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good, leading to pupils' good overall achievement. However, the quality of teaching and marking varies throughout the school. In the best lessons, pupils work at a brisk pace and make good progress with their work. This is because staff have higher expectations and make careful assessments to ensure that learning activities are challenging. In addition, pupils extend their learning by discussing their work with a partner and carrying out independent investigations. Helped by teachers' constructive marking they have the opportunity to reflect on their own work and consider how they can improve further. However, in a few lessons, more-able pupils, in particular, do not always reach the standards of which they are capable. This is because learning activities do not challenge them as effectively as in the best lessons and teachers' marking does not always inform them how well they are doing or provide clear enough guidance on how they can improve further.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The rich and relevant curriculum, which is greatly appreciated by parents, provides a wide range of activities for pupils. As one parent typically commented, 'The school is always coming up with new ideas!' Links between subjects are emerging which reinforce pupils' learning and help to make learning interesting and relevant. Pupils' motivation is best when activities are practical and purposeful. For example, when older pupils designed and built impressively tall tower structures made out of a range of materials. This involved much critical thought, discussion and evaluation with regards to the stability of the structures. Pupils also enjoy producing high quality artwork to support their learning in a range of topics. The provision for information communication technology (ICT) is improving and is a current whole-school focus. The school is developing more reliable assessments to ensure prior learning is always built upon. ICT is increasingly being used as a tool for learning across the curriculum. A range of additional programmes provide effective support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which helps them access all the school has to offer. The curriculum is enriched by a good variety of additional activities, ranging from gardening to sporting events.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good overall. Parents refer to the 'fantastic' support the school provides for pupils. The school provides strong pastoral support and all staff play a

part in promoting pupils' welfare. Every pupil is known and encouraged to achieve, with phrases such as, 'have a go' and 'you can do it' heard in the classrooms. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and pupils say they would have someone to talk to if they had any worries or concerns. Pupils' progress is tracked well and pupils who are not doing as well as expected are provided with extra support. Academic guidance is generally effective. Pupils work towards targets for improvement and most are provided with useful guidance on how to structure their writing. Parents say they are well informed about their child's progress. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are carefully monitored, nurtured and supported by skilled teaching assistants. There is a strong commitment to support pupils who speak English as an additional language. Although there is some effective support for more-able and gifted and talented pupils, particularly in mathematics, this is not always evident throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher and staff provide a positive, caring ethos, with a good focus on raising achievement and promoting pupils' personal development and well-being. School leaders have successfully ensured that good quality teaching and learning has been maintained during a period of significant staff changes. Staff readily undertake training and take the lead on new initiatives to enhance the work of the school. Governors amply fulfil their role as critical friend and the school benefits from their community links and professional expertise. Effective arrangements ensure all pupils have equal opportunities to participate in all activities. A good range of partnerships with other agencies and schools contributes well to pupils' achievement and welfare. Self-evaluation is effective overall, but is sometimes too informal. This has led the school to being somewhat generous in its view of some aspects of its performance. School leaders have a clear view of how the school should improve. However, the criteria by which improvements can be measured are not always clear enough. This can make it difficult for school leaders, staff and governors to regularly monitor the success of new initiatives, and to ensure that these are always consistently developed and applied to promote the highest standards. The school's commitment to community cohesion is good. Pupils benefit from close links within the locality, as well as many enrichment opportunities with a multi-cultural dimension. In addition, the strong link with a school in Kenya has enabled pupils to develop a growing awareness of the similarities and differences between their own lives and those in other communities. The school provides good value for money.

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?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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 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

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 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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making the other inspector and I so welcome when we inspected your school. We enjoyed meeting you, visiting your lessons, and joining you in assembly, at playtime and at dinnertime. You should be very proud of yourselves! You are very friendly and polite and your behaviour is excellent. We could see how much you enjoy your time at Aston Lodge. We admired your beautiful artwork around school and the impressively tall towers you built! We could see you know a lot about how to keep healthy and enjoyed finding out about your 'Global garden' and all the sporting activities you do.

Aston Lodge is a good school, with good leaders, teachers and governors. Adults in school look after you very well, so you feel very safe and happy about asking them for help. You work very hard, make good progress with your work and usually reach standards higher than in many schools. Many of your lessons are very interesting and challenging so you really have to think hard! I have asked your teachers to share ideas about how they can make more of your lessons this challenging and make sure that when they mark your work they show you how well you are doing and how you can do even better. This will help those of you who are capable of reaching even higher standards to do so.

I also want your headteacher, teachers and governors to check that all the hard work they do to make your school even better is successful.

Keep working hard and enjoying your school!