

# Excalibur Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	111038
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cheshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	325280
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Kevin Johnson

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.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	201
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
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Yvonne Hilditch
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Gail Tindall
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 November 2005
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Ivy Lane Alsager Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST7 2RQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01270 872825
<b>Fax number</b>	01270 872825

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and inspected the following issues: provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), standards and achievement, aspects of care, guidance and support and the leadership and management of the school. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data, the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, and observation of the school at work, including visits to lessons and analysis of parents' questionnaires. Interviews were held with senior members of staff, pupils and governors. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in the self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in the report.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized school. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is much lower than the national average. Similarly, a very small proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has achieved the local authority and national Healthy School awards, as well as the Inclusion Quality Mark and Activemark.

The headteacher was appointed to the post on the day prior to the inspection, having led the school as acting headteacher since June 2008.

There is a pre-school and before- and after-school club on the school site. These provisions were inspected separately and receive a separately written report.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Highly effective leadership and management have brought about high quality care and education for pupils. Their excellent personal development is reflected also in their outstanding academic achievement. Indeed, this is an outstanding school.

Pupils really enjoy school because they are fully engaged and challenged by the outstanding curriculum. Lessons are filled with interesting activity and pupils say they like their teachers very much. Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is excellent and pupils' attendance is above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They are extremely caring towards one another. Pupils are strongly opposed to bullying and racism and are adamant that neither exists in their school. They have very good insights into their own heritage because of strong links with the local community. Through their links with pupils from schools where there are many minority ethnic cultures and their active support for a school in Namibia, pupils gain an excellent awareness of local and global diversity.

Pupils' pursuit of healthy lifestyles is a very important item on their personal agenda. The Healthy Schools and Activemark awards are fully justified because of pupils' efforts to eat sensibly and to keep fit. They are proud of the fact that lunch menus include a salad bar and vegetarian options and they add that they eat sensibly at home, too. The school council has been instrumental in establishing a gardening area and pupils are awaiting the outcome of a bid to secure funding for a greenhouse. The wide range of activities to encourage fitness is very popular with pupils, including the annual residential visit where pupils sample more adventurous pastimes such as rock climbing.

Pupils take their responsibilities extremely seriously and this adds to the very strong sense of community within the school. Older pupils are trained as peer councillors and are very skilled at smoothing out occasional playground disagreements. The school council ensures that all pupils have an opportunity to voice their opinions. Enterprising schemes, such as organising cake sales and school discos, enable school council members to raise the funding needed to put their ideas into practice. Participation in the town's annual carnival and support for Alsager's 'One World Week' help pupils to develop the life skills they need to become part of a community, and prepare them exceptionally well to take on future challenges.

Standards are well above average at the end of Year 6 and have risen year-on-year over the past four years. School assessments and inspection evidence indicate that these standards are set to continue. From entering Reception with skills in line with expectations for their age, this represents outstanding achievement. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make outstanding progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 are currently above average. This improvement on previous standards is a result of the schools incisive analysis of national test results and successful action in setting greater challenges, especially for more able pupils.

The outstanding quality of teaching and learning ensures pupils' rapid progress. Teachers reflect on lessons, evaluate pupils' learning accurately and continuously use assessments to plan lessons, which challenge pupils to achieve more. Such challenge was evident in a mathematics lesson where the teacher generated tremendous enthusiasm and excitement as pupils gained in their confidence and ability to apply their basic knowledge of multiplication tables to solving problems. A vital part of the teaching force is the highly motivated team of teaching assistants whose personal skills and sensitivity contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding progress.

Exceptional care, guidance and support are major contributors to pupils' overall achievement. Parents believe that their children are safe and very well cared for. Staff members do all that they can to provide the most vulnerable pupils with the special care they need in order to contribute fully to school life and achieve their best. Procedures for safeguarding all pupils fully meet requirements. The quality of academic support and guidance is excellent. There are highly effective systems in place to check pupils' progress and set new targets. Pupils know their targets and are given clear guidance, through detailed marking, about what they need to do to improve.

Outstanding leadership and management at all levels have steered the school through a difficult period of staff changes. The headteacher has brought tremendous stability and strength to the leadership and in so doing has ensured that standards overall have continued to rise. The whole-school response to issues identified for improvement is immediate. This is seen, for example, in the rapidly improved standards at Key Stage 1 and in the marked improvement in mathematics standards following the previous inspection. Pupils invariably meet their academic targets and more ambitious targets are set for the future. Senior managers provide highly effective support for the headteacher by keeping a close watch on academic performance and maintaining the strong ethos of teamwork in the school. All staff members are clear about their areas of responsibility and have many opportunities to monitor the impact of their work and contribute to the schools improvement. Excellent links with schools, colleges and local community providers complement the already outstanding curriculum and greatly enrich pupils' learning. A business enterprise project, for example, helps Year 6 pupils to understand the world of finance and to discover 'what money means'. Governors monitor the school's performance extremely well. The Governors' Action Plan enables them to check the progress of school developments systematically. They provide very strong challenge and support for the school. Finances are managed very effectively to provide outstanding value for money. The school has excellent capacity to maintain the outstanding quality of education, which it provides.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Children settle very quickly into the Reception class and achieve rapidly in all areas of learning due to the outstanding management of their learning and development. Children enter Reception with expected skills and understanding for their age and almost all are working securely within, and many beyond, their early learning goals at the end of Reception. Planning is excellent and provides for exciting learning opportunities, both indoors and in the outside area, for children to work with adults or choose activities for themselves. For example, a selection of breakfast cereals to help children link letters and sounds stimulates exciting independent learning. Some children practise their writing by taking breakfast orders from the class. Others join in role play or use breakfast cereals to make cakes while teachers take advantage of every opportunity to engage children in conversation about their chosen activity. Provision for children's welfare is excellent. Key worker roles are very well established to ensure that all staff play a part in ensuring children's safety and well-being. Exceptional care is provided for children with additional needs. For example, photographs of the most vulnerable children with relevant information about their care are posted in every classroom in the school. Daily observations enable adults to evaluate children's progress step by step and to plan very effectively for what they need to do next. Excellent links with pre-school providers, and subsequently, many parents, put both parents and children at their ease at the start of the Reception year. Regular meetings and

curriculum workshops for parents strengthen relationships and children benefit from the resulting extra support they are able to receive from home.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- There are no significant issues which the school has not already identified and included in its own plans for development.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
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?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

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

<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

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

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave us when we came to inspect your school recently. It is an outstanding school and you all play your part in its success because of the way you work hard in school and with other pupils in different towns and countries.

It was a pleasure to talk to you all because you are so polite and well mannered. We learned a great deal about how you take care of each other and how proud you are to be Excalibur pupils. Your behaviour is excellent and your attendance is above average. Well done and keep it up!

We agree with you about your lessons being fun and because you have excellent teachers, you reach high standards in your work and achieve extremely well. In fact all of the grown-ups in school take extremely good care of you.

Your headteacher, teachers and school governors are just as proud of your school as you are and they are determined that it will continue to be the hard working and friendly school that it is today. I also have to say that your parents seem to love your school as much as you do so you must make sure that you don't let them down.

I am not asking school leaders to make any particular improvements because they already have their own very good plans.