

Alvaston Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112743
Local Authority	Derby City
Inspection number	338005
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Doris Bell

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	325
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Tiochta
Headteacher	Susan Penglase
Date of previous school inspection	5 December 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They spent the majority of their time looking at teaching and learning, observed 18 lessons and saw all full and part time teachers who teach. They also held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at teachers' planning, pupils' books, the school improvement plan, monitoring and evaluation records, assessment records, records for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, safeguarding procedures and the latest report from the School Improvement Partner. The responses from the pupil and staff questionnaires were analysed, as were the responses from the 123 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether pupils are making more progress in English and mathematics now than they have done in the past
- how well pupils are taught and whether the school makes best use of what it knows about how well they are doing to improve their learning
- the quality of provision for and the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the resourced unit
- how well leaders and managers at all levels understand and carry out their roles in helping to improve pupils' learning
- the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures.

Information about the school

This larger-than-average primary school has a local authority Enhanced Resource Facility (the ERF unit) that caters for up to 22 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This takes the proportion of pupils with such needs to above average overall, although the proportion in the main school is broadly average. The pupils' needs relate mostly to moderate learning difficulties, but a small proportion of the pupils also have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, including those whose first language is not English, is below average. The school has achieved the Gold International Schools Award and has recently achieved the Healthy Schools award; it operates a breakfast club jointly with the infant school that shares the same site.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is

- failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons
- responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the
- capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

In the main school pupils' progress, learning and achievement are inadequate. In most years pupils' attainment on entry to Year 3 is average. For several years national test results for pupils in Year 6 have been significantly below average in English, mathematics and science, as is the attainment of pupils currently in Year 6. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and teaching does not build systematically enough on what pupils already know. Pupils are grouped by ability for literacy and numeracy, and work is planned to suit the needs of each group. However, within the groups, and with the exception of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, work is rarely matched to pupils' individual learning needs to enable them to move on faster as and when they are able to do so. Despite the introduction of new assessment procedures in September 2009, the information gained is not being used to best effect in the classroom or at whole school level.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress overall. This is because their individual education plans have clear targets, support staff give them additional help in working towards the targets, and those responsible for managing the provision for them check their progress regularly. Pupils taught in the ERF unit often make good progress in literacy and numeracy lessons because staff there keep a close check on how well they are doing, and use the information effectively to build their learning up step by step. These pupils are integrated into the main school satisfactorily each afternoon. Support staff adapt the activities planned for the whole class to ensure the pupils understand them and make satisfactory progress in different subjects.

In lessons, learning objectives and outcomes are always shared with pupils but these are sometimes confused and not always explained clearly enough. Marking does not often enough provide pupils with clear guidance on how to improve, and does not always reinforce individual targets or learning objectives. Pupils have begun to be involved in assessing their own and each other's work. However, their comments focus more on the quantity of work than on the quality of learning, and some spelling errors in the pupils' comments mean the comments are not always as helpful to other pupils as

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they could be.

While the pupils' 'Big Write' folders show they undertake longer pieces of writing at regular intervals, work in their English and mathematics books too often focuses only on technical aspects leaving pupils with too few opportunities to use and apply their skills; for example, to practise writing at length in between the 'Big Write' events in different subjects, or to solve problems in mathematics. In science and in other subjects, pupils' work touches on a range of knowledge-based topics but much work is left unfinished and skills are not being built up progressively as pupils move through the school. While there is basic coverage of required elements in information and communication technology (ICT), challenge for pupils is limited in this subject. Analysis of their files shows that pupils' ICT skills are underdeveloped. The curriculum does not help to secure progression in skills because planning lacks detail and skills are not taught in a consistent way.

The school has due regard for pupils' health, safety and welfare. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. They know who to go to if they need help. Pupils form good relationships with each other and with staff, and were observed on several occasions helping each other in class and in the playground. Their behaviour is satisfactory. Some older pupils and a good proportion of parents who replied to the inspection questionnaire, feel a sense of injustice when, in order to manage the misbehaviour of a few pupils, the whole class, or, as with arrangements at lunchtime, the whole school, appears to suffer. This somewhat mars their enjoyment of school. Pupils contribute satisfactorily to the life of the school and the wider community.

Changes in staffing, and difficulty in recruiting suitable replacements, left the school without a full leadership team for most of the last school year. With a full staffing complement now in place, action is being taken to make better use of assessment and to raise standards in English. However, not all members of the leadership team fully understand their role in school improvement and they are not all pulling together effectively, or embedding with others the drive and determination to tackle the issues facing the school. While they recognise that there are weaknesses, senior leaders and governors are not taking the robust action necessary to overcome them. Despite acknowledging the pupils' continued underachievement and the inconsistencies in teaching causing it, the school judges itself to be satisfactory and improving. Its self-evaluation is therefore too generous. In addition, governors do not hold the school sufficiently to account for its outcomes. All of this, coupled with a track record of low attainment and achievement, means the school is not demonstrating capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' progress by raising teachers' expectations of pupils' learning and ensuring that:
 - the outcomes of assessment are used consistently in all planning so that pupils'

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work is better matched to their different levels of ability

- the teaching of writing includes more opportunities for pupils to write freely and to practise writing at length more frequently
 - the teaching of mathematics gives pupils more opportunities to use their skills to solve real-life problems
 - marking shows pupils what they have to do to improve their work, and teachers give pupils time to respond to marking
 - writing, mathematical and ICT skills are promoted effectively in different subjects.
- Introduce rigour into the monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, and especially of teaching and learning, by:
- establishing a whole-school view of what good teaching, learning, leadership and management look like and taking steps to ensure all staff come up to the raised expectations
 - making teachers more accountable for their part in accelerating pupils' progress in all year groups, in order to raise standards in Year 6
 - increasing the role of governors in holding the school to account for its pupils' outcomes.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Too many pupils underachieve in lessons and consequently do not reach high enough standards in English, mathematics, science or ICT. This means that, despite their satisfactory behaviour and attendance, they leave the school inadequately prepared for the future.

Progress in writing has improved slightly in Year 5 in recent months, with the focus on encouraging pupils to write about things that interest them outside of lessons. Spelling and grammar skills, extensively practised in lessons, remain relatively weak when pupils write at length. This is because pupils do not have enough opportunities to write freely or to use these skills in longer pieces of writing, other than when it is time for the 'Big Write' sessions where there is a structured approach to writing at length. During the inspection, for example, pupils' progress was limited in one Year 6 lesson by the process of building up one piece of persuasive writing over several lessons. This prevented pupils writing at length freely, using their own ideas and opinions to structure their work, or progressing at different rates according to their individual ability. In another Year 6 lesson, much learning time was lost when pupils were asked to create lists of words in an activity more suited to Year 4 pupils, before moving on to a reading task that was much too difficult for them. This happened because their previous learning had not been assessed accurately so that it could be built on effectively. Progress in mathematics is particularly weak with pupils in Years 5 and 6 having made only around half the progress expected in those two years. The data handling work observed during the inspection showed pupils completing a number of exercises correctly but finding

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difficulty using and applying their skills to solve real-life mathematical problems.

Pupils understand well the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise, and the Healthy Schools award acknowledges this. Pupils make healthy choices at lunchtimes and most lunch boxes seen contained healthy food. An understanding of healthy living has led to pupils and their parents complaining about the lack of opportunity for exercise with the recent lunchtime arrangements. Through the school council, pupils make a satisfactory contribution to school life, and fundraising activities ensure pupils gain a sound understanding of issues facing people in the wider community and beyond. The vast majority of pupils are polite. They engage well with visitors and with each other, and readily talk about what life is like at school. They willingly accept responsibility, and those who cover the office at lunchtimes very much enjoy answering the telephone and taking messages.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Pupils' learning is hindered because teaching does not pay sufficient attention to what pupils already know, the curriculum does not provide enough guidance on how to

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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ensure progression in each subject, and assessment information is not used effectively enough to plan the curriculum or pupils' learning in the classroom.

Pastoral care is generally effective in supporting the needs of all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Staff establish positive relationships with pupils and make effective provision for their safety and well-being. In contrast, the guidance and support for learning are inadequate. Marking consists mainly of ticks and, except in literacy and numeracy, work can remain unmarked for some time. It provides pupils with little guidance on how to improve their work, reach targets or meet learning objectives. There are few examples of pupils' work on display to enable them to learn from each other.

While teaching ranged from good to inadequate during the inspection, pupils' work shows that overall, it is inadequate. In Year 6, pupils' learning is sometimes too closely controlled by the teacher thereby preventing them from, for example, writing freely to show and develop their skills. In class, most pupils undertake the same work regardless of their ability levels, because teachers pay too little attention to planning work that builds on existing learning. This means activities are sometimes too challenging, or at too low a level to accelerate progress. Teachers' subject knowledge is not always secure enough in mathematics. This was evident in the inaccurate modelling of how to construct and use a timeline.

Teaching is not sufficiently supported by the curriculum. Over a year ago, the idea of 'Learning Challenge' work was introduced with the intention of linking subjects to make the curriculum more creative. In practice, most teachers have stayed with a subject-based curriculum. The light-touch coverage of subjects, and the absence of guidance on how to ensure progression in them, means skills are not being built up step by step as they should be.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers, including governors, are not taking effective steps to secure good teaching that will accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards. They are not therefore embedding ambition and driving improvement. They do not use assessment information well enough to track and improve learning or to analyse how well different groups of pupils are performing. The school did not meet its targets last year and it is not on track to meet them this year, although the targets are realistic given the pupils'

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attainment on entry to Year 3. Due attention is given to promoting community cohesion, including teaching pupils about different faiths, ethnicities and cultures at home and abroad, and to ensuring that they understand that racism and any other form of discrimination is wrong.

Checks made on teaching and the curriculum do not focus sufficiently on improving learning; nor do the success criteria in the school improvement plan and its accompanying action plans. Safeguarding procedures meet current requirements and pupils' welfare is taken seriously, but governors do not challenge the school sufficiently to address weaknesses in teaching and learning. A significant minority of parents and carers have concerns over key aspects of the school's work and, while partnerships with others ensure pupils' well-being, they do not lead to better learning and achievement. The school has not done enough to tackle the issues raised at the previous inspection. This, its current weaknesses, and its track record of underachievement all demonstrate that it lacks the capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	4
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	4
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

While a few parents and carers praised the school, a significant minority voiced concerns about several key aspects of its work. Over 20% of parents who responded to the questionnaire were particularly concerned about their children's progress, the information they get about this and how well the school helps them to support it. More than 30% raised concerns about teaching, leadership and management, and felt the school did not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Many parents and carers

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complained about the lunchtime arrangements introduced this year, saying they curtail pupils' freedom and limit opportunities for physical activity. Inspectors spoke to pupils about this and pupils' views are recorded under outcomes in this report.

With regard to the issues raised about pupils' progress, inspectors agreed; they found progress to be inadequate. They also found there were few opportunities for parents and carers to engage with staff on an informal basis to discuss how well their children are doing. However, the school states it is always willing to see any parent who has concerns, and the headteacher and deputy headteacher are available at the gate each morning with and staff there each evening. Inspectors' findings about teaching, leadership and management are given elsewhere in this report. With regard to behaviour, pupils also raised concerns in their questionnaire responses but inspectors found behaviour to be satisfactory during the inspection itself. Pupils spoken to felt the school dealt satisfactorily with any untoward behaviour and they knew who to go to if they had concerns in this or any other area.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alvaston Junior School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 325 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	39	32	68	55	13	11	2	2
The school keeps my child safe	49	40	66	54	5	4	3	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	23	64	52	23	19	4	3
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	19	70	57	20	17	6	5
The teaching is good at this school	24	20	70	57	21	17	5	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	17	67	54	28	23	4	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	24	81	66	12	10	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	30	24	60	49	21	17	3	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	19	76	62	19	15	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	17	57	46	30	24	15	12
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	18	15	70	57	21	17	11	9
The school is led and managed effectively	22	19	59	48	22	18	16	13
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	21	63	51	27	22	7	6

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alvaston Junior School, Derby, DE24 0PU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school and for talking to us about what you do there. It is good to see that you know how important it is to follow a healthy life style, that you feel safe, and that you have a good understanding of how to keep yourselves safe. As school councillors, you clearly contribute to the school by listening to and following up the views of others to help improve it. We noted that in your questionnaires you expressed some concerns about behaviour. We found behaviour to be satisfactory. You told us the school deals with any unsatisfactory behaviour and that you can turn to someone for help if you do have any concerns in this area.

Unfortunately, we found that you do not make enough progress in many subjects, especially in English and mathematics, that you have not done so for some time. School leaders could do more about this. We are therefore recommending that your school gets some extra help and guidance (we call it 'special measures') to be able to change this.

We have asked the school to help you make faster progress by:

- improving how well you are taught by giving you work at the right level and marking your work more effectively
- helping you to improve your skills in writing, and in solving problems in mathematics
- giving you good opportunities to use your literacy, numeracy and ICT skills in different subjects
- making sure all the people in charge keep a really close check on your learning and help your teachers to see that they all have a part to play in how well you do by Year 6.

We believe all of this will help you to make the good progress you are capable of. You can help by showing your teachers how hard you can work when you get the right sort of work to do. We wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Doris Bell

Lead inspector

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