

Alexandra Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124011
Local Authority	Stoke-On-Trent
Inspection number	359563
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs J Donaldson
Headteacher	Miss Linda Pennington
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2008
School address	Melville Road Normacot, Stoke-on-Trent Staffordshire ST3 4PZ
Telephone number	01782 235505
Fax number	01782 235507
Email address	alexinf@sgfl.org.uk

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Inspection number	359563

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors who observed 13 lessons taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and staff. There was also some discussion with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, looked at national assessment data and the school's own assessments, policies and minutes of meetings of the governing body, teachers' planning, samples of pupils' work and evidence of how the school's progress is monitored. Twenty-three questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those completed by staff, were scrutinised.

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

- How well the learning for different groups of pupils is provided for and supported in the classroom.
- Whether the curriculum celebrates cultural differences and promotes harmony and enjoyment.
- The extent to which leaders and managers have brought about improvements, since the last inspection.

Information about the school

This is an average sized infant school in which the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much larger than that of similar-sized schools. Almost two-thirds of pupils are from heritage groups other than White British. The largest single group is Pakistani, comprising about half the school's roll. A very high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. A significant number do not speak English when they join the school. The number of pupils who join or leave the school at other than the usual times is above average.

The school has achieved several awards for its curricular provision and currently enjoys Healthy School status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It is highly regarded within its community. Strong leadership, outstanding care, guidance and support and highly positive relationships with parents and carers enable all pupils to achieve well.

Recent improvements in provision for children entering the Nursery class mean that their learning and development gets off to a good start. Children's attainment on entry is very low in all areas of learning and significant numbers of children do not speak English. They make good progress throughout the Nursery and Reception classes, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Provision for outdoor learning, however, is a weaker aspect, particularly for children in the nursery.

Progress overall is good in Years 1 and 2. The restructuring of the curriculum and practice in Year 1, to ensure better progression from the Early Years Foundation Stage, is being established, and progress for those pupils is improving as a result. Good progress continues in Year 2, so that pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that pupils' attainment in writing, particularly that of boys, lag behind other subjects because too few pupils attain the higher levels. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress. Indeed, the schools' analysis of their progress indicates that some are among the school's highest achievers. Contributing factors are the high quality bi-lingual support and excellent care and guidance provided for them. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are also well supported. Their needs are very quickly identified and a wide range of help is planned including specialist help, where necessary, from agencies that work with the school. Consequently, they make good progress from their particular starting points. Good teaching, with some examples of outstanding practice, accounts for pupils' good progress. Teachers know their pupils as individuals and cater well for their varying needs in lessons. The curriculum is broad and often exciting for pupils. It nurtures their enthusiasm for learning and provides many rich and enjoyable experiences. Pupils' personal development is good. They are proud of their school, feel safe, and thrive in the harmonious family atmosphere. Pupils' understanding and tolerance of others' cultural differences are particular strengths.

Rigorous monitoring and review of the school's work have provided leaders with an accurate view of its overall effectiveness. Pupils' targets are consistently challenging and re-set to ensure their good progress. More accurate use of assessment has contributed to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning. These have been further consolidated by strategic staff appointments. The governing body challenges the school well and effectively contributes to the school's good capacity for improvement.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in writing, by:
 - making sure that more-able pupils are always challenged to achieve their best
 - fully embedding throughout the school, recently introduced strategies to improve writing.
- Improve provision for learning through exploration and play in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by enhancing the quality of the environment, and of the resources, in the outdoor areas of the Nursery and Reception classrooms.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils enjoy school and because of their attentiveness and good behaviour in lessons they learn well. They are expected to work hard and are generally well motivated by the activities provided. Pupils develop skills across subjects and they learn at a good pace, for example, when they apply their writing skills and use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their work in history.

Good progress and achievement for all pupils is reflected in the school's improved performance in all subjects over the past three years, which has seen pupils' attainment rise to broadly in line with the national average. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress overall. Some make rapid progress, especially in speaking and reading skills, and achieve better than expected. Generally, however, pupils' performance in writing lags behind that in other subjects. Strategies, such as 'talk for writing' have been adopted to boost pupils' attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their individual starting points and many achieve levels broadly expected for their age by the end of Year 2.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The deep respect that pupils have for one another is rooted in the school's values and sense of community and is demonstrated equally through their good behaviour. They are willing to take on responsibilities, such as play leaders or members of the eco-team, and, given the age-range of pupils, they contribute well to the community through their involvement in environmental projects. Pupils have good understanding of what constitutes a sensible diet and why exercise is important to a healthy life. A large majority take school meals. Attendance is broadly average and improving. However, pupils do not have a regular voice in school affairs and this, with their average attainment and attendance, contributes to their no better than satisfactory acquisition of the skills they need to secure their future well-being.

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

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers plan lessons well and make them enjoyable by creatively using a variety of resources to help pupils learn. Good use is made of ICT and pupils use their skills to research and record information in other subjects. Relationships are good enabling pupils to learn confidently and at a good pace. Outstanding teaching was seen in a lesson where the teacher set very high expectations from the outset, and ensured that pupils knew exactly what they were to learn and the purpose of the lesson. Outstanding learning was generated by the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and skilful use of the interactive white board to keep pupils on their toes. Their understanding was constantly checked to make sure that all pupils achieved their lesson objectives. Teaching assistants are a valued part of the staff team and their collective skills contribute well to the good quality learning of different groups. Teachers use assessment information well to set targets and check progress. Pupils know their targets and teachers' good marking ensures that they know what they need to do next. Occasionally, the pace and challenge of a lesson are not as high as they could be and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to assess individual pupils' understanding or to correct their spoken language.

The curriculum engages pupils well and contributes to their good achievement and enjoyment of school. There is a good focus on pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and there are imaginatively planned opportunities for pupils to apply these skills in other subjects. Learning is enriched very well by an extensive range of activities in school, as

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

well as those out of the classroom. Links with other schools and providers increase opportunities, for example, for art, dance, gymnastics and sports.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support is evident in the relationships within school and its work with families. Staff are keenly aware of the needs of different groups of pupils. An excellent example is the nurture group which provides exceptionally well for the pastoral and learning needs of the most vulnerable. Home-school links are highly productive and play a strong part in helping to raise pupils' attendance. Transition to the junior school is extremely well managed. Parents and carers are fully justified in their view that their children are safe and very well cared for in school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has successfully managed some recent staff changes and effectively communicated her determination to achieve the best for all pupils. All staff share the responsibility for raising standards. Their work to increase the effectiveness of assessment has lifted the overall quality of teaching and learning. The headteacher is ably supported by senior leaders who play a crucial role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance. Subject leaders have a clear understanding of strengths and what can be improved, and they contribute well to the school's accurate self-evaluation.

The governing body challenges and supports the school well. Statutory responsibilities are carried out efficiently, including that of safeguarding pupils, where good strategies and procedures are in place. All staff are suitably trained and are fully aware of their collective and individual responsibilities. The schools' partnership with parents and carers is excellent. There are many well-attended family learning and other workshop opportunities arranged which are designed to enable parents and carers to work with their children at home. Bi-lingual support in school ensures that all sections of the community are kept informed about day-to-day matters. The school challenges strongly all forms of discrimination. Leaders are ambitious for each pupil and are determined that for every individual there is an equal opportunity to and expectation that they will, achieve their best. The governing body and staff have brought together a fully cohesive community, where cultures merge harmoniously among pupils and parents and carers alike. Pupils' horizons are broadened through their mutual exchange visits with a rural school that has different characteristics from their own, and more global links are being sought in order to build on pupils' existing, positive experiences.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children make good progress from starting points which are generally well below those expected for their age in all areas of learning. There is good provision for personal social and emotional development. Children quickly gain in confidence and independence and develop important skills for learning. By the time they leave reception, most are working within the early learning goals but their communication, language and literacy skills are not as well developed as those in other areas of learning. However, there is always a strong focus on developing language skills. Children who speak English as an additional language receive highly effective bi-lingual support when they first enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, including dual-language stories. As their confidence grows, interaction with teachers and other children helps them gain well from the good variety of well-planned activities. Outdoor provision is uneven between the two classes. It is better resourced and managed in reception, where children are able to develop learning independently through play, for example, by acting out the story of Red Riding Hood while the teacher recorded it on video. Outdoor provision for nursery children, however, is not as well resourced and the environment not so stimulating. Leaders recognise this as a priority for development, in order to provide better opportunities for children to learn and develop through exploration and play. Provision for children's welfare is good. There are very good systems for assessing children's progress and planning their next steps. The effective Early Years Foundation Stage leader maintains a clear overview of provision and progress in both classes. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent and contribute well to children's development and well-being.

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

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. There was unanimous agreement about the highly effective way in which the school cares for pupils, as well as positive comments about the quality of other areas of provision. There were almost no concerns. Those which did arise were discussed with school leaders.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alexandra Infants' 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 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	61	8	35	1	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	65	8	35	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	13	57	8	35	1	4	1	4
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	52	10	43	0	0	1	4
The teaching is good at this school	12	52	9	39	1	4	1	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	52	10	43	0	0	1	4
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	52	10	43	0	0	1	4
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)	12	52	9	39	0	0	2	9
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	48	10	43	1	4	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	52	10	43	0	0	1	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	61	7	30	1	4	1	4
The school is led and managed effectively	12	52	10	43	0	0	1	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	15	65	6	26	2	9	0	0

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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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 pupils' 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.



8 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alexandra Infants' School, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 4PZ

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave the inspection team when we came to inspect your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and were pleased to find out how much you enjoy school. Your behaviour is good and you work hard. I was very pleased to see that your attendance is improving. That is most important so you must keep that up.

Alexandra Infants is a good school. You make good progress. Your reading, writing and mathematics standards are improving steadily, but your writing especially needs to improve even more. I agree with you that your teachers make lessons fun. They work hard to make them so and that is why you make good progress. The grown-ups in school take excellent care of you. Your teachers and headteacher work extremely well with your parents and carers so that they can also help you to learn.

I am sure you would like your school to be even better. To help that to happen I have asked your teachers and headteacher to do two things. The first is to help you to be better writers, by making sure that all of you work to the very best of your ability and by making sure that their plans for helping you to write really do work. Secondly, I have asked if children in the nursery can have more things in their outside area to help them enjoy playing and learning by themselves

Yours sincerely

Mr Kevin Johnson

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.