



Acton CofE Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111265
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278641
Inspection dates 13 March 2006 to 14 March 2006
Reporting inspector Mr Michael McIlroy HMI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Chester Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Acton
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 8LG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01270 625172
Number on roll	123	Fax number	01270 610958
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs R Phillips
Date of previous inspection	29 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr J Wycherley

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
4 to 11	13 March 2006 - 14 March 2006	278641

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

The school is situated in the village of Acton near Nantwich and serves a rural community, which has lower levels of disadvantage than is the case nationally. It is below average in size and few pupils are eligible for a free school meal. Fourteen per cent of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and three pupils have a statement of special educational need. There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most pupils enter the school with levels of ability at or above those expected for pupils of their age. The school has strong links with the local church.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Acton is a friendly school which provides a good education for its pupils. This judgement matches that made by the school.

Pupils enjoy a good start to school in the Reception class and do well in all areas of learning. This good progress continues in Key Stage 1 and in recent years standards for pupils aged seven have been above average. Last year, however, results dipped slightly. Older pupils continue to achieve well in their learning. Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 2 have been above average for the last three years and show an overall pattern of improvement since 2003. In 2005 there was a marked improvement in English. Standards also rose in mathematics, but slipped slightly in science. Standards in information and communication technology (ICT) are satisfactory but could improve further. Last year the school exceeded its targets for English and mathematics.

The personal development and well-being of pupils are good, as is the curriculum. The care, guidance and support for pupils are satisfactory. There are effective links with other organisations. Parents are very supportive of the school but some require more information about how pupils are consulted.

The quality of leadership and management in the school is good. The headteacher and the senior leadership team are focused on school improvement. Effective steps have been taken to remedy the key issues raised in the last inspection. Teaching and learning are good overall but there are some weaknesses in the otherwise satisfactory teaching. Efficient systems exist to assess and track pupils' progress and underachievement is identified and tackled. However, the use of day-to-day assessment to guide pupils on how to improve their work is underdeveloped.

Governance is good. The school is well placed to improve further and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Share the best elements of effective teaching to increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Further develop assessment so that pupils can be given more guidance on how to improve their work.
- Raise standards in ICT.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The inspection agrees with the school's judgement that achievement and standards are good.

Pupils make good progress in the Reception class and by the end of the year most have achieved the early learning goals. There is a strong emphasis on language work and on the personal and social development of pupils. In Key Stage 1 pupils maintain

this good rate of progress. In 2003 and 2004, pupils aged seven achieved standards in reading, writing and mathematics that were above average. Last year scores dipped in reading and writing. This was due to weaknesses in pupils' ability in this small year group. Nonetheless, the school has analysed these results and taken action to ensure standards remain high.

In Key Stage 2 pupils continue to achieve well. Standards achieved in the national tests for pupils aged 11 in the past three years have been consistently above the national average. Last year saw a strong improvement in English results and over a half of pupils achieved the higher Level 5. This was contributed to by additional classes in English outside the school day. There was also improvement in mathematics results but science results dipped slightly. Most of the more able pupils achieved well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also did well because of the good support they receive. Last year the school exceeded its challenging targets in English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The spiritual, social and moral development of pupils are very well developed through religious education and well planned and interactive assemblies. Pupils' self-esteem is enhanced by the celebration of awards. Moral education is further promoted by circle time and the school's key 'four rules'. Cultural awareness is developed through multicultural displays, visits to places of worship of other faiths and a wide range of visiting speakers.

Pupils enjoy school. This is evidenced by their attendance which is above average. Behaviour is good. Pupils move quietly and safely around school and play sensibly in the playground and in the colourful 'adventure playground.' They are polite and helpful to visitors and considerate to each other.

Pupils feel safe in school. There is good supervision at playtimes and lunchtimes. Racial harmony is evident and pupils know who to turn to in the case of any bullying. They have positive attitudes to learning and contribute enthusiastically in lessons.

Pupils are aware of the need for healthy lifestyles. Older pupils have opportunities to exercise responsibility through the school council, which is elected by all pupils. Councillors make suggestions on how to develop the school and their views are listened to. They also act as playground 'buddies' to younger pupils. Other pupils act as classroom monitors. Pupils contribute to the wider community and develop their economic understanding through charity fundraising, some of which they initiate and organise themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of teaching and learning to be good overall. This agrees with the inspection judgement.

Two thirds of lessons inspected were good. In the Reception class, lessons were carefully structured to facilitate a good balance of teacher-directed and pupil chosen activities. The best teaching was characterised by high expectations, very careful explanation of what pupils had to do and a good match of tasks to pupils' abilities. Teaching assistants were well deployed to extend learning for younger pupils and to support those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. More able pupils were stretched by opportunities to work with older year groups. Interactive whiteboards were used very effectively. In one good literacy lesson, Reception pupils confidently used the whiteboard to identify letter sounds. Pupils' progress is assessed regularly and this information is used by teachers to plan new work.

Weaknesses in some satisfactory teaching included a lack of clarity in what pupils had to do, and a lack of pace, which allowed some to lose concentration.

The quality of learning is good overall. The very good relationships between staff and pupils contributed to this. Pupils' thinking and speaking skills were well developed by skilful questioning and good opportunities for discussion; for example, the strategy of 'talking partners' is used effectively. Pupils worked well, both collaboratively and independently, when asked to do.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. There is a suitable focus on mathematics and science and a strong emphasis on English. ICT is satisfactorily developed through a specific programme designed for classroom use, as the school has no ICT suite. Reception pupils benefit from a carefully planned curriculum which makes good use of the well resourced and bright classrooms. Whilst there is no separate external area for Reception pupils, good use is made of the 'adventure playground' to provide for the outdoor curriculum. The school has plans to build an outdoor area for Reception pupils.

There is a good range of extracurricular clubs including those for football, knitting, sewing and scrabble. Spanish is also taught throughout the school. In addition to a recorder club, the school hosts tuition in five different musical instruments. There are good opportunities for enriching pupils' learning, such as those provided by visiting artists and musical groups. Educational visits are organised to places of historical and geographical interest.

Pupils receive an appropriate amount of homework. The school's inclusive approach ensures that there are good opportunities for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make progress and for gifted and able pupils to be stretched.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The care, guidance and support which pupils receive are satisfactory. There are effective induction arrangements for new pupils. Older pupils stated they were being well prepared for the next stage of their education. Pupils are taught about growing up and about the dangers of hazardous substances. The teaching of road safety is made a priority, given the school's location. Healthy lifestyles are promoted through wholesome lunches, the infant fruit scheme and a healthy snacks caf, at break time. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well met. Vulnerable pupils are sensitively supported. Child protection procedures are in place but not all named staff have up to date training.

Pupils receive satisfactory academic guidance. Pupils have learning targets which are regularly updated. Parents have the opportunity to discuss these with staff. The progress of pupils is tracked and results are used to identify underachievement and to plan extra booster classes. However, the day-to-day guidance for pupils on how to improve their work is underdeveloped. Marking is satisfactory but does not yet offer pupils enough information on the next steps to take to improve their work. The school has identified this as an area for development.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The leadership and management of the school are good. Under the leadership of the long-serving headteacher standards overall have remained consistently above average. He provides clear direction for the school and has ensured there is a good climate for learning. There are effective links with other agencies promoting pupils' education. His evaluation of the school's performance is broadly accurate. He understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The key issues from the last inspection have been addressed. Parents and pupils are consulted about school developments through questionnaires and discussion. Some parents are unclear about how pupils are consulted.

The senior leadership team is keenly focused on school improvement. Test results are tracked and carefully analysed. The outcomes of this analysis form the priorities for the annual school improvement plan. Lessons are monitored regularly.

Middle management is effective. The deputy headteacher, in her role as special educational needs and assessment manager, carries out her responsibilities well. The Foundation Stage is well led by the Reception teacher. Key stage leaders and subject managers have opportunities to observe lessons. They monitor pupils' work informally.

Governance of the school is good. Governors are well informed about, and involved in, the work of the school. They provide good support and challenge for the

headteacher. Resources and finances are carefully administered. The school possesses the capacity to improve and provides good value for money.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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?	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for being so helpful and polite when I inspected your school recently. I am writing to tell you what I found. Some of the best things I saw were:

- your behaviour is good, both in lessons and in the playground
- you are polite, kind and helpful to each other
- your teachers work hard and teach you well
- you have a good range of clubs to take part in
- your school helps you grow up responsibly and safely.

I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to make some changes to make things better at your school. These are:

- to make all teaching as good as the best which I saw
- to change how your books are marked so that you are able to see what you must do next to improve your work
- to make things better in ICT for you.

Once again, thank you for being so polite and helpful when I visited your school.