

Acton CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111265
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	325333
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	109
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 R Phillips
Headteacher	Mrs Beverley Dolman
Date of previous school inspection	13 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Chester Road Acton Nantwich Cheshire CW5 8LG
Telephone number	01270 685131
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector.

Description of the school

This small school serves a wide area around the rural village in which it is situated. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from other heritages. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in the Reception class. Extended provision and care is offered through Acton Action Kids, an after-school club, managed by the school, which opened this year. In the school year 2007-2008, the school did not have an appointed headteacher until the start of the summer term.

The school holds the Activemark and the Bronze Eco Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This rapidly improving school currently provides a satisfactory standard of education for its pupils. After a lengthy period of declining standards, the school was further unsettled by changes in the teaching staff and gaps in leadership. The effective new headteacher has brought about improvements in provision and this is reflected in an upturn in standards this year. The improvements have not yet had time to impact fully on the rate and consistency of pupils' progress and the school is aware that more needs to be achieved. Pupils have continued to flourish in their personal development and well-being, however, and good standards of pastoral care have been sustained.

Children leave the Reception class with skills that are above the expected levels for their age. Broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in 2008, however, reflected that the rate of progress across the school had been too slow. Standards had been falling for the past five years. The issues around this problem are now being tackled energetically and a recovery has begun. Achievement is now satisfactory. In the current year, pupils have made better progress in Key Stage 1, with pupils in Year 2 on track to reach above average standards by the end of the key stage. Progress has also speeded up in Key Stage 2 in the current year, and, as a result, pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards in all subjects by the end of the year. However, there is more to do to ensure that pupils progress at a consistently brisk rate across the year groups and subject areas, particularly in Key Stage 2, so that all may achieve as well as they possibly can. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily in relation to their starting points and abilities, because of the provision the school makes for them.

The quality of teaching is good and the school has worked hard to ensure this is the case, despite some further staffing changes this year. The curriculum is satisfactory. It is currently being revised to ensure that it is interesting and relevant for the pupils and this is helping them increasingly to enjoy learning. Care guidance and support is satisfactory overall. Good pastoral care enables pupils to feel secure and ready to learn. Assessment and procedures to track progress have been improved this year, with a formal review of all pupils' progress each term. This has begun to impact positively on the standards that pupils reach. Work has begun to involve pupils in reviewing their own progress against individual learning targets. This initiative is at an early stage, but it has started to help to move pupils' learning forward, especially in Year 6. However, in other year groups, although individual targets are used, pupils and their parents are not given sufficiently clear information about how well they are doing.

Parents say they feel that their children are cared for well. Attendance is good, reflecting good relationships between home and school. Pupils' outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes mean that lessons run smoothly and playtimes are happy. Pupils develop good social skills and moral values and have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. Their spiritual development is nurtured well through opportunities for reflection in assemblies and in lessons. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is currently satisfactory, as the school has not yet fully developed provision to prepare them for life in a diverse society. Pupils are active fundraisers for a range of charitable causes and they show concern for the needs of others. Their good personal development and improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy mean that they are prepared well for the next stage in their education. The school's focus on healthy living, ecological awareness and community involvement contributes well to pupils' good personal development.

Leadership and management is satisfactory overall. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and increasingly effective subject leaders are united in their resolve to bring about school improvement and in their high expectations of the pupils and themselves. They are supported well by knowledgeable governors who have steered the school safely through difficult recent times. Systems are in place to ensure that the quality of provision is monitored rigorously and the school's self-evaluation is very accurate. All of these factors mean that the school has satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, including effective leadership, enables children to make a good start to their education and to become happy and receptive learners. From broadly average starting points on entry to Reception, they achieve well. By the end of the Reception Year attainment is above expectations for the age group and children have gained significantly in confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Sessions focusing on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and this is having a positive impact on children's achievement in literacy. The quality of teaching is good and stimulates learning well. The curriculum provides activities, indoors and in the well resourced outdoor area, which are well matched to the children's needs, and provide them with interest and fun. Provision for children's welfare is good. They interact well with each other and enjoy warm relationships with the caring staff. Parents appreciate the good communications between home and school and the good care provided for their children. Effective teamwork by staff promotes the children's progress and well-being. Vulnerable children and those with additional learning needs are supported well. Children's progress is observed carefully and assessment is systematic, so that additional support is given promptly to those who need it. Good links with external agencies promote children's health, welfare and progress. The after-school club provides a caring and enjoyable experience for the children from the Reception class who attend it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that good rates of progress are sustained and that this is consistent across year groups and subjects, so that pupils of all abilities achieve as well as they possibly can.
- Develop the use of individual learning targets so that pupils and their parents have an accurate understanding of how well they are doing and what the next steps in their learning will need to be.
- Develop opportunities for pupils to broaden their awareness of cultures beyond their own, to prepare them for life in a diverse society.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enter Year 1 with skills levels that are above expectations for their age group. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 declined between 2005 and 2007 and, although they began to rise a little, were still only average overall in 2008. Many pupils who might reasonably have been expected to achieve the higher level did not do so. Inspection evidence shows that progress has improved during the current year in Key Stage 1. As a result,

standards are rising and pupils in the current Year 2 are now on track to achieve above average standards in mathematics, reading and writing. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average in 2008; standards in science were below average. This represented the fifth year of a continuous decline in standards. As in Key Stage 1, more able pupils did not do as well as they might have been expected to. The school has started to take action to improve on this, with some early signs of success evident, although more remains to be achieved. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of the year. However, the school's assessment information for the current year shows that, although overall progress is satisfactory, its pace is still too variable across year groups and subject areas. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily in Key Stages 1 and 2, as a result of the individual programmes of support that are provided for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development contributes well to their improving achievement. It is shown in their excellent behaviour, their courtesy and their positive attitudes to school. The school's caring ethos ensures that pupils grow in self-esteem and form good quality relationships with staff and with each other. Friendships cross age groups, and older pupils show exceptional care and consideration for the younger ones. Pupils acquire sound moral values; opportunities to reflect on serious issues in assemblies, circle time and religious education lessons support their good spiritual development. Their cultural development is satisfactory and they are starting to gain an understanding through the curriculum of what life is like for children around the world. This is at an early stage of development, however. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as playtime buddies, as school councillors, road safety officers or eco officers. They collaborate well in groups or with a partner in lessons. These important life skills are developed well; their improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy mean that pupils are prepared well for the future. They have a good awareness of personal safety and healthy lifestyle issues reflected in the external awards the school has achieved. Pupils' smooth transition to the next stage in their education is supported well by the school's links with the high school. Attendance is good and has improved significantly over the past school year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and this underpins the rise in standards that has been achieved. Where teaching is most effective, teachers use questions and prompts very well to enable pupils to expand their thinking; this helps to move their learning forward more rapidly. Across the school, pupils are given a clear understanding of the purposes of their learning tasks. Lessons are challenging for all abilities and teachers give attention to timings and pace. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used satisfactorily as a teaching aid and this increasingly helps to make learning interesting. Lessons are planned well to meet the range of pupils' needs, activities engage their interest and pupils are responsive and apply themselves well. Happy relationships in the well managed classrooms enable them to feel secure and ready to learn. Teaching assistants work in partnership with class teachers, and contribute to all pupils' learning, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils' work is marked conscientiously; the quality of marking has improved during the current year and it

is now much more informative. However, there has not been enough time yet for this to impact fully on standards and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The satisfactory curriculum contributes to pupils' personal, social, health and academic development. An appropriate focus during the current school year on developing pupils' basic skills in English, mathematics and science has begun to impact on improving standards and achievement. Skills in ICT are developed satisfactorily and pupils use computers with increasing confidence to retrieve information during their work across the subjects. The revisions that have been made this year mean that the curriculum is more interesting and relevant for pupils, who say that they enjoy their lessons. It provides them with opportunities to practise and develop key skills, including a modern foreign language, through topics and themes which link subjects together. Although it is too early for the impact on standards to be evaluated, pupils and staff have made an enthusiastic start with the new curriculum. Pupils and parents appreciate the way the curriculum is enriched through visitors to school, educational visits, including residential trips, and a good range of after-school activities including sport and dance.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral care for its pupils. It supports its more vulnerable pupils well, working sensitively with them and their families to help to tackle the barriers to learning they may be facing. Pupils are confident that adults are readily on hand to help with any problems that arise and this makes them feel secure. Those who have additional learning needs are supported appropriately through withdrawal groups and additional adult help in class. The school liaises with external agencies to promote pupils' progress, health and well-being and complies with statutory requirements for health and safety, including safeguarding and child protection. Care is managed well in the after-school club and pupils enjoy the good range of activities on offer. The quality of the academic guidance for pupils has been improved and pupils are given good verbal feedback in lessons. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and rigorous new systems are in place to ensure this. Pupils and their parents are not always given enough information about how their individual learning targets relate to National Curriculum levels, however, and this makes the use of targets less effective than it might be in informing them about how well they are doing. Effective measures have been taken to improve attendance, through the use of positive incentives and through working with families for whom regular attendance has been a problem in the past.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The new headteacher provides good leadership. During her first year in post improvement has been achieved in many important areas. Pupils' rates of progress are still uneven and the school's leaders are aware that there is more to do. Nonetheless, the headteacher has defined a clear vision for taking the school forward, based on an accurate and rigorous analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Her vision and resolve are shared by the effective deputy headteacher and by governors and staff at all levels. Robust systems for evaluating how well the school is doing are now in place and are being used well. Senior staff and subject leaders

are increasingly effective in assisting in assuring the quality of provision. Whole-school improvement targets are challenging and aspirational and leaders identify and plan appropriate actions to achieve them. A team ethos enables staff to share and develop their skills and to embark on curricular innovation with growing confidence. The supportive and knowledgeable governing body is able to hold the school to account and act as its critical friend. The school addresses community cohesion satisfactorily through its activities in the community and the parish, and through its links with other local schools. Opportunities for pupils to work with children from different backgrounds from their own have not been developed, however. Partnerships with parents are developed well through regular communications and initiatives that support parents' involvement in their children's learning.

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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?	3
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?	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

Inspection of Acton Church of England Primary School, Nantwich, CW5 8LG

Thank you for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. As you know, I came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. I found that the school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education. These are some of the best things I discovered about the school.

- The school is improving rapidly; you are starting to achieve more and to make more rapid progress in your learning. Keep up the good work!
- The Early Years Foundation Stage gets your education off to a good start.
- You are taught well and your teachers make lessons interesting; this is helping you to raise the standard of your work and to improve your skills across all the subjects.
- Your behaviour is excellent and you are caring and thoughtful young people; this helps to make the school a good place to learn and grow.
- The grown-ups in school look after you well.

There is still work to be done to make Acton the best school it can possibly be. I have asked the headteacher and the staff to continue the drive to raise standards and achievement by:

- making sure that you all progress at a good, brisk rate in all of your subjects and in every year group
- working with you on your individual learning targets to make sure that you and your parents understand clearly how well you are doing and what the next steps in your learning will need to be
- developing opportunities for you to find out more about what life is like for people in places that are different from the area you live in.

You can help by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future.