

Acresfield Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111205
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	337640
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Judith Straw

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Antony Mylchreest
Headteacher	Mr Mike Dixon
Date of previous school inspection	21 March 2007
School address	Acres Lane Upton By Chester Chester CH2 1LJ
Telephone number	01244 981020
Fax number	01244 373283
Email address	head@acresfield.cheshire.sch.uk

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 13 lessons taught by seven teachers. They held meetings with parents and carers, groups of pupils, governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at improvement planning, policy documents, national published assessment data, the school's own data on pupils' progress and pupils' books. Inspectors analysed 74 questionnaires from parents and carers, 81 from pupils and 13 from staff.

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

- the strategies used by the school to improve the progress of all pupils, particularly pupils of higher ability
- how well the school uses assessment information to plan the next steps in learning
- how effectively the school is raising the quality of teaching to accelerate the progress pupils make
- the effectiveness of governors in monitoring the school's work to see how aware they are of its strengths and weaknesses.

Information about the school

This is a smaller-than-average primary school on the edge of the city. The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. The school has a learning resource centre for up to 10 pupils with moderate or severe learning difficulties. The number of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is high because of the number of pupils from army families who move more frequently because of their professional commitments. The school has gained a number of awards since its last inspection including Artsmark gold, Healthy Schools Award, Dyslexia Quality Friendly Mark and Eco-Schools bronze.

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 where all outcomes are good and pupils' behaviour and contribution to their community are excellent. 'I couldn't wish for a better school for my children,' is the verdict of one parent, speaking for many parents and carers. Children feel extremely safe in this school which provides outstanding care, guidance and support so that pupils achieve well.

Children's attainment on entry to Reception is generally below typical expectations for their age, particularly in language and communication and in calculation. They make good progress through the school so that their attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. Attainment has been improving over the last four years and in some areas pupils are reaching above-average standards. A greater proportion of the higher-attaining pupils are gaining higher levels than seen nationally, particularly those in Year 6 in mathematics and in Year 2 in writing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make better than expected progress. The achievement of some of these pupils is excellent because of the outstanding support they receive in the learning resource centre and throughout the school.

Pupils achieve well because teaching is predominantly good and sometimes outstanding. One parent described it as 'inspiring'. Among the staff there is much enthusiasm and determination to continue improving the school. The marking of pupils' work is mainly good but sometimes teachers miss opportunities to help pupils improve and move forward. The curriculum is planned well to ensure that pupils cover all that is required and tackle more demanding work as they progress through the school. The new thematic approach and the very wide range of extra-curricular opportunities result in happy, engaged pupils who enjoy school.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is moving the school forward with the full support of parents and carers, staff and the governing body. The school's partnership with parents and carers is outstanding because they feel consulted and well informed. One member of staff commented in the questionnaire that 'this is a school where you can grow and learn as a teacher'. Self-evaluation is accurate and sound plans are in place to tackle areas identified for improvement. However, some of these plans lack precise measurable success criteria by which leaders and managers can judge progress. Overall, progress since the last inspection and evidence of pupils' rising standards and levels of achievement show the school's good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of teaching by ensuring that all teachers' marking and

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feedback helps pupils improve the quality of their work.

- Ensure that all planning includes clear, measurable success criteria so that the school can more precisely judge how well it is succeeding.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

In the large majority of lessons inspectors observed pupils enjoying their learning. They were attentive, very well behaved and supported each other. Pupils here are enthusiastic learners, interested in the world around them. Increasingly, they develop independent learning skills so that they make good progress even when working with little direct supervision. They know and can discuss their targets and are proud of their achievements. All groups of pupils achieve well and make good or better progress.

Pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are courteous and helpful to each other, their teachers and visitors. They are immensely considerate of disabled pupils and look after each other with kindness and respect. This also extends to others; for example, they entertain the residents of a local care home for morning coffee each month. Many make an outstanding contribution to their own community as school councillors, eco warriors who manage recycling in school and devise ways of helping to promote care for the environment, and 'bright sparks' whose duties include carefully monitoring whether electrical equipment and lights are turned off whenever possible. Two elected school captains represent their peers and all pupils spoken to felt that their voice was heard and that they were listened to as individuals. Pupils also said they feel entirely safe and that lessons in personal social and health education inform them well about hazards in society. Their understanding in this area is excellent. Pupils take good notice of the school's strong focus on promoting fitness and health and can easily describe what a healthy diet looks like. In many areas of the curriculum they learn about the beliefs and lifestyles of people from different backgrounds and the focus on core values each half term promotes spiritual, social and moral understanding. Pupils are well prepared for the future because they develop good social skills and personal attributes. They have a well-established pattern of above-average attendance and punctuality.

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

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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The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching and learning are good and some teaching observed during the inspection was outstanding. Examination of pupils' books showed that teaching is good across the school. Some marking is excellent with a sound combination of praise for what pupils have achieved and advice on how to do even better, but this is not consistent across all classes. Pupils know their targets and can discuss their group and individual targets. Staff have a good, encouraging relationship with pupils and plan work which is challenging. Teachers have good subject knowledge and base lessons on the starting points for each individual pupil. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and play an important role in supporting different groups of pupils to achieve well.

The increasingly creative curriculum is one reason why achievement is good and pupils enjoy their learning. They develop numeracy, literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the full range of subjects. There are many visits and visitors and whole-school events such as the recent Victorian day. Learning is modified for pupils in the learning resource centre so that they are able to follow the same curriculum as their peers but on a level more suited to their individual needs. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is provided with as many as 20 different clubs offered across the year. Sporting activities are enjoyed by all pupils. The school has exciting plans to develop the curriculum further by making more use of the extensive and attractive gardens, field, wildlife pond and woodland.

The school takes excellent care of all its pupils. They report that they feel entirely safe and free from bullying or harassment of any kind. Parents and carers state that their children are safe and happy and inspectors agree. Before- and after-school care is provided in 'Fledglings', where parents and carers can register their children to be looked after from 7.50am until 6pm. Children enjoy the many activities provided. The school has excellent transition arrangements into school and prepares pupils in Year 6 well for secondary education. Outstanding support is given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities both in the learning resource centre and across the school. A learning mentor is available for any pupil who appears to need additional advice or support either academically or emotionally.

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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 and senior leadership team are thoughtful and analytical and have the loyalty and respect of the staff, pupils, and parents and carers. They have a clear strategy for improvement and effective actions are being taken to raise attainment and accelerate progress. A wide range of support staff are well deployed and all have additional responsibilities and play a major role in ensuring that the school moves forward quickly. The school has high expectations and sets challenging targets for staff and pupils. The headteacher and all the class teachers carefully monitor the progress of every individual pupil and have a good range of strategies to support those in danger of falling behind or making slower progress than they could.

The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate. Improvements have been made in teaching, the curriculum and the resources and accommodation. There is a shared vision for improvement and good plans are in place but the school needs to be more precise in setting success criteria to measure the effectiveness of its work. The governing body puts its wide expertise to good use in supporting and monitoring the school. The 'governor of the month' initiative ensures that every month one governor spends time in school meeting staff and pupils and looking at different aspects of provision. Governors take an active role in ensuring that the school's safeguarding procedures are good.

There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and staff work hard to ensure that every pupil is enabled to make the best progress possible. The school provides a welcoming environment for pupils from all backgrounds and those who join and leave at other than the usual times. There is no racism in this happy and positive school. The contribution of the school to the local community is excellent with numerous links with a local care home, hospices, the army barracks and other organisations in the city. Links are developing at national level and there is a good partnership with a hospital school in Uganda. The school promotes community cohesion throughout the curriculum by developing a good understanding of other lifestyles and other faiths.

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

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	
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

Children make good progress in the Reception class from starting points which are lower than those expected for their age, especially in writing and calculation. Over time children develop independence, work and play harmoniously together and sustain concentration well. Teaching is mainly good and the curriculum is well-organised to cover all requirements. There is a good balance between children being able to make their own choices about learning and adult-led activities. Adults record children's small steps in learning so that good plans can be made to guide their next steps. New accommodation has been provided since the last inspection and children enjoy the stimulating learning environment with ready access to a well-equipped outdoor learning classroom. Experienced leadership ensures that all health and safety requirements are met and sometimes exceeded. Teamwork is strong, with good links between home and school so that parents and carers feel involved in their children's learning and know how to help and support them.

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

Most parents and carers were entirely happy with the school. They believe their children enjoy school and feel that their children are safe. Almost all feel well informed about

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their children's progress. They praise the headteacher, the staff and the many improvements which they see being made to the curriculum. Almost all the parents and carers who commented said that their voice is heard and that they are listened to responsively. Inspectors agree with these views. Two parents expressed concern about mixed classes and one about discipline. Inspectors found that mixed class groups make good progress and that pupils' behaviour is excellent.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Acresfield Community Primary 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 162 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	58	78	15	20	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	77	16	22	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	44	59	29	39	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	50	68	20	27	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	68	22	30	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	54	73	18	24	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	62	25	34	2	3	0	0
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)	48	65	22	30	0	0	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	49	66	22	30	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	59	25	34	3	4	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	55	28	38	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	59	80	13	18	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	78	14	19	1	1	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 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	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 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 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.



28 June 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Acresfield Community Primary School, Chester, CH2 1LJ

Thank you for making my colleagues and I so welcome when we visited you in school this week. I would like to thank you for talking to us so openly and showing us around the school, the gardens and the woodland walk. I very much enjoyed assembly when Years 3 and 4 presented their review of the year and gave a wonderful performance, in song and dance, of 'Ground Control to Major Tom'.

You told us that you enjoy school and that it is a happy friendly place where staff are kind and you make good progress. We agree. We think yours is a good school and some parts of its work are excellent. The care you receive is outstanding. Your behaviour and the way in which you support your own community and the local residents are also outstanding. We think the school councillors, eco warriors and bright sparks are doing a great job.

Some of the lessons we saw were excellent. We have asked the school to make sure all lessons are equally good. This will help you all to make even faster progress. We have also suggested that the school checks more regularly to make sure its plans for improvement are really working.

Your parents and carers were full of praise for the school. Please thank them for responding to our questionnaire. Many of them said how much they appreciate the work of the headteacher and the staff. After visiting you this week, we can see why you are so proud of your school.

We wish you all well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Judith Straw

Lead inspector

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