

Alford Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120440
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	358761
Inspection dates	4–5 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

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	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandie Spenceley
Headteacher	Debbie Forster
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 17 lessons involving 12 teachers and looked at pupils' work in different classes. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, staff and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation including: safeguarding policies and procedures, the school's tracking data of pupils' progress, the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning as well as 84 parental questionnaires and questionnaires from pupils and staff.

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

- What does the school's evidence show about the attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage?
- Is the overall progress through each key stage at least satisfactory, particularly in mathematics?
- How effectively do teaching, assessment and curriculum serve the needs of all pupils, particularly those of lower ability?
- What is the impact of the school's work on pupils' personal development?
- What is the extent of pupils' understanding of multicultural diversity in Great Britain and in the global context?

Information about the school

This primary school is larger than average and serves the town of Alford. Nearly all of pupils are from White British background. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average as is the proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The school has achieved Basic Skills Quality Mark, National Healthy Schools Gold Award, Artsmark Gold Award and Active Mark.

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

3

Main findings

The school provides pupils with a good education. It is a very caring, happy place where pupils feel extremely safe and valued. They form strong relationships, work hard and enjoy learning. Their understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle is outstanding. The good care, guidance and support they receive ensure that most achieve well. Parents speak highly of the school, with a typical comment being, 'my child is really happy here'. The school's outstanding partnership with parents and carers makes certain that they are kept well informed and fully involved in their child's learning. The curriculum provides pupils with good learning experiences and exciting extra-curricular opportunities, including a wide range of clubs and residential visits to enhance their learning. As a result, pupils are happy and confident young citizens who make an outstanding contribution to their school and wider community.

Children's starting points, on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage, are lower than those typical at this age. They make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Progress accelerates through Key Stage 2 where teaching is generally good or better. At the end of Year 6, pupils attain standards that are above average in English and broadly average in science and mathematics. English is a strength because provision is good. The school's action to raise standards in mathematics is starting to have impact, particularly at Key Stage 2. While most pupils make overall good progress, the rate of progress is not consistent through each key stage because there are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and teacher assessments. Throughout the school, pupils who have a statement of special educational needs, a disability or emotional and behavioural problems receive good individual support and guidance and so achieve well. A minority of pupils, particularly at Key Stage 1, who need additional help to stay on track with their targets, do not always make the same level of progress because their needs are not identified early enough to help them catch up quickly, particularly in mathematics.

The school knows what it needs to do to improve but its self-evaluation is overgenerous. The headteacher is new to her role, as are other leaders and managers. Following the tests results in 2009, school leaders accurately identified that standards in mathematics were declining. Strategies to address this have been slow to take effect because monitoring, particularly of teaching and learning lacks rigour. Teachers are not held sufficiently to account to ensure that they assess pupils' attainment accurately and that they use this information to secure good progress in every class. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection on the issues identified at that time, notably in the curriculum which is now good and ensuring that pupils understand their targets. The decline noted in science in 2009 has been rectified successfully. This demonstrates the school's satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teachers build on what pupils can already do and have higher expectations of all pupils, but particularly the more able
 - sharing good and better practice seen in the school to secure good teaching in every class
 - identifying quickly pupils who fall behind their targets and providing them with the help they need to catch up quickly.
- Secure good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 by
 - ensuring that teacher assessments are accurate and used effectively to match work to pupils' needs
 - developing children's literacy and numeracy skills in the Reception class so that they are better prepared for Year 1
 - improving the transition arrangements from the reception class to Year 1 so that pupils make accelerated progress throughout.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels by:
 - monitoring teaching and learning rigorously and holding teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class
 - evaluating the school's performance more accurately so that the right action is taken quickly to help all pupils make good progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Achievement and enjoyment are good overall. Standards in English are consistently above average because literacy is taught well. Standards in mathematics are not as high because teaching has not placed sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' mental calculation skills. This is being addressed satisfactorily. The decline in science results at the end of Year 6 in 2009 was successfully resolved and in the 2010 assessments, the pupils attained average standards. The high emphasis on 'learning by doing' is a key to this swift improvement. Practical and investigative activities effectively incorporate pupils' ideas and involve pupils in using the internet to find information and answers to their questions. Pupils' progress and level of engagement in their lessons varies depending on how well teachers match tasks to pupils' abilities. This is more effectively done in Key Stage 2 where lessons consistently challenge all groups of learners, so that they achieve well. For example, pupils in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, worked with intense concentration as they explored facts about two-dimensional shapes. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and effective use of information and communication technology generated enthusiasm and extended pupils' understanding extremely well. In a few lessons, mainly at Key Stage 1, pupils' progress is not as rapid because teachers spend too long revisiting previous learning and do not challenge pupils enough. Pupils say they find some of the work in these lessons too easy. While most pupils with special educational needs make good progress because teaching assistants help them effectively, any that fall behind their targets are not always identified quickly enough to progress as rapidly.

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Pupils develop the skills and personal qualities they need to equip them well for

- their future lives. Their outstanding contribution to the school and wider community is reflected in the mature way they help with the day to day smooth running of the school; the serious way they undertake roles as school councillors and playground buddies; their exceptionally kind and caring attitudes towards each other and the sensible way older pupils ensure younger ones play safely; they look after the school environment and organise numerous fund raising events. Pupils work well together and are very accepting of other people and their views. They show respect for others by listening sensibly, as reflected during worship, a time pupils regard with reverence. Their eagerness to learn and their kindness towards others reflect their good spiritual development. Pupils behave well and say that if problems arise, they are confident they can go to staff for support. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe, for example the dangers posed by internet chat-rooms or hazardous activities such as rock climbing. Their adoption of healthy lifestyles is reflected in their excellent meal choices at lunchtimes and their extensive participation in sport and other physical activities. While they are confident with each other and recognise that differences should be respected, they are less sure about what life is like for communities in other parts of this country and in the wider world. Their attendance is average.

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	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2
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

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How effective is the provision?

Overall teaching is good because lessons run at a lively pace and teachers plan interesting activities that encourage pupils to think about their learning. Where teachers set time limits, for example in mathematics, pupils' enjoy the challenge, work rapidly and so achieve more. In good lessons, teachers ask probing questions and use discussion between pupils well to share ideas and be more confident in their answers. For example, in a Year 4 lesson pupils worked together well to construct imaginative sentences to annotate a shipwreck scene. Effective use of computers and other technology supports pupils' learning particularly well. Teaching assistants are used effectively in supporting pupils who find learning difficult to participate fully. Opportunities are occasionally missed to give pupils, particularly the more able, time to develop their ideas more independently. In the few less effective lessons, assessment is either not wholly accurate or not used to match work to pupils' needs suitably. These lessons often lack pace and challenge. This results in a few pupils becoming inattentive and restless and so they make slow progress. Marking is generally good in showing pupils to how to improve their work.

The curriculum is well organised and puts good emphasis on developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. The increased time given to extend pupils' mental calculation skills is proving successful, particularly at Key Stage 2. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their skills for example, in art, music and physical education, and their study of French enhances their cultural development. Themed events and other activities extend pupils' interests and learning well. Modified plans and additional intervention programmes effectively support pupils who need help with their learning. A good personal, social, health education programme ensures pupils understand, for example, how to stay safe and the dangers of drug abuse. Good links with others, including the secondary school, enrich learning further and inspire pupils to achieve more. Visitors and visits enrich pupils' experiences, but pupils have insufficient opportunities to explore other traditions, faiths and cultures.

Pastoral care arrangements are good. Parents and carers say that staff respond promptly if individuals and their families need help. The school is particularly good at supporting pupils who experience social, emotional or other specific difficulties and links with other agencies to support them are good. While most pupils achieve well, those that occasionally fall behind their targets are not always identified early enough to help catch up quickly.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

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How effective are leadership and management?

Parents, pupils and staff have high regard for the new leadership team. School leaders have a secure understanding of what needs to be done but are not sufficiently rigorous in their monitoring of teaching and learning and in holding teachers to account for pupil performance. Opportunities are missed to share the good practice at the upper end of the school to secure good teaching throughout the school. Effective deployment of staff has secured pupils' good progress through Key Stage 2 but progress elsewhere is not as rapid because teacher assessments are not scrutinised closely to check their accuracy to inform the next steps in learning, particularly at Key Stage 1. The staff team is energised by the recent changes and morale is high. Governors have a realistic view of the school's effectiveness and areas for improvement and are influential in determining the strategic direction of the school. They recognised that standards in mathematics were a concern and secured support from the local authority to help remedy this. Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Every precaution is taken to ensure that all the procedures to keep pupils safe are implemented rigorously. The school promotes equal opportunities well and pupils actively value difference and diversity. All pupils, regardless of need have the opportunity to enjoy all that the school offers. Parents feel extremely well informed and involved in their children's learning. Through its excellent relations with parents and carers, the school promotes community cohesion well locally and has plans to develop its national and international links.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

An enthusiastic staff team has embraced the recent changes and developments to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children have a vibrant learning environment and good quality resources to explore and enrich their experiences. The

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children show good levels of independence. Detailed staff observations, reveal that children make the best progress when they initiate activities. For example, children learned about spherical shapes well by blowing bubbles and chasing them excitedly, because 'it is like trying to catch a ball'. Their knowledge and understanding of the world developed effectively and they had immense fun watching the colours change as the bubbles floated around them. They make choices and share well with others. When children are engaged for too long on adult-led activities then their concentration wanders and their learning slows. Staff maintain a reasonable balance between children leading their own learning and adult-led activities. Children make satisfactory progress overall and their progress in their personal and social development is good. However, time devoted to promote children's literacy and numeracy, which are the weakest areas when children start school, is insufficient to accelerate their learning in readiness for Year 1. Children are still below average in these skills at the end of their Reception Year. The school's assessments suggest that children are above average in almost all areas of learning by the end of the Reception year, but these assessments are over-generous when tracking pupils' progress through Key Stage 1. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Over a quarter of the parents and carers responded to the questionnaires. Most are very positive about the school and its friendly, caring ethos. A few wrote comments to indicate how much their child enjoyed school and that staff were very friendly and approachable. A few raised concerns regarding their child's progress: that their children did not enjoy school and that their needs were not always met. These concerns were followed up during the inspection through direct observation, talking to pupils and looking at the school's policies and procedures in order to confirm the overall judgements in this report. The inspection team's findings confirm parents' and carers' positive views. They judge that most pupils enjoy school, are well supported and make good progress. A few could do better, particularly in mathematics.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alford 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 84 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 311 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	57	68	24	29	3	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	59	70	25	30	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	51	61	31	37	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	56	67	23	27	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	71	85	13	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	55	65	28	33	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	56	67	25	30	1	1	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)	53	63	30	36	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	68	24	29	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	54	34	40	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	47	56	32	38	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	64	76	20	24	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	62	74	22	26	0	0	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.



6 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alford Primary School, Lincolnshire, LN13 9BJ

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome. A special 'thank you' to those pupils who spent time showing us their work and talking to us about why you like being at your school. We enjoyed meeting so many of you and looking at the work you have done so far this term. Your school gives you a good education. It takes good care of you and helps you to become confident young people who look after each other, enjoy working together and meeting others. Your behaviour is good and the contributions you make to the school and others in the wider community are outstanding. You keep the school environment pleasant and tidy and you do much to support many charities and other causes. We could see from all the photographs on display that you have fun at school and it was really good to hear how much you enjoy the residential visits, especially rock climbing. You certainly know how to keep yourselves safe, fit and healthy. You make good progress in your learning and attain standards that are typical for your age at the end of Year 6.

You make the best progress when your teachers give you tasks that challenge you as well as meeting your needs and you do particularly well in English.

To make the school even better, we have asked the adults in your school to:

- help you achieve as well in mathematics as you do in English by making your lessons more challenging and giving each of you the help you need to improve
- make sure that children in the Reception class and in Years 1 and 2 make good progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy
- check how well you are learning and to look at the work you do in your books and in your lessons to make sure you are all working as hard as you can.

With very best wishes to you all

Yours sincerely

Rajinder Harrison

Lead inspector

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