

Arden Forest Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130893
Local Authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	315649
Inspection date	31 October 2007
Reporting inspector	Mike Capper

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	162
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Cave
Headteacher	Sharon Harris
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2007
School address	Weston Lane Bulkington Bedworth CV12 9RT
Telephone number	02476 315913
Fax number	02476 315913

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the effectiveness of the school's strategies to improve pupils' progress in writing and to raise attendance; the role of subject leaders, and rates of pupils' progress. Evidence was gathered from observations of teaching, pupils at work and play, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, scrutiny of documentation and an analysis of parents' views. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Pupils come from the local village, the nearby army barracks and from further afield. The proportion identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the number eligible for free school meals. A small number of pupils from the army barracks join the school in the early stages of learning English. Their main home language is Nepali. The school also has a small number of children from the Traveller community. The headteacher took up post in September 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where children make excellent progress and learn good social skills and values. Pupils achieve so well due to the exceptionally high quality of teaching and academic support, which is consistent across the school. Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception Year and standards continue to improve at a rapid rate as pupils get older. This means that from below average starting points, standards rise to well above average by the end of Year 2 in English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils make outstanding progress in reading because of the many opportunities that they get to read at home and at school. In writing, where progress is good, there have been many helpful improvements to teaching and learning in the last year, leading to a good rise in standards. The school is beginning to develop links between subjects so that pupils are able to practise writing skills across the curriculum more regularly, but these opportunities are not yet extensive enough to support outstanding progress in writing.

Pupils rightly comment that, 'Every day is fun and we learn lots of new things'. Throughout the school, teachers ensure that work is well matched to pupils' differing abilities. Teachers imaginatively bring subjects alive. For example, in a Year 2 literacy lesson, the use of role-play successfully helped pupils to learn about the meaning of Remembrance Day. Pupils who learn more slowly or are in the early stages of learning English are supported very well by able teaching assistants. Pupils from the Traveller community are given work to do when they are travelling with their families. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and make very good use of praise to encourage an 'I can do' attitude in lessons. This means that pupils are keen to do their best. Teachers are diligent about marking pupils' work and there are very thorough systems for giving pupils targets to aim for. Pupils find these helpful and, consequently, they have a very clear understanding of how to improve their work.

Pupils are very well cared for and this helps to ensure that their personal development is good. Pupils behave well at all times and they greatly enjoy school, although rates of attendance are slightly below average. The school is doing a great deal to improve attendance. For example, pupils' attendance is very rigorously monitored and absences are followed up quickly. Consequently, attendance rates rose in the last academic year. However, a very small number of parents are still not conscientious enough about avoiding unnecessary absences for their children. The good curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of experiences. It successfully reflects their interests and helps pupils to develop a good understanding of how to stay safe at school and at home. Pupils especially like the outstanding way in which the curriculum is enriched by activities outside lessons, especially in sport. Visits and visitors support learning and personal development extremely effectively. This can be seen in the way that talks from Nepalese parents help pupils to develop an excellent appreciation and respect for cultures other than their own. There is a strong and very successful focus on teaching pupils about how to be healthy. Pupils' excellent awareness of healthy diets was demonstrated very clearly in the way that they recently planned healthy meals from different countries for a 'seaside day'.

Pupils are justifiably proud of their school and the way it helps them to become responsible young citizens and thus to make an excellent contribution to the local community. Pupils are currently working with a park ranger to develop local recreational facilities. Members of the school council speak confidently about how they have helped to improve the school. The thoughtful way that councillors respond to questions from the governing body is particularly

impressive. Activities such as these, as well as pupils' excellent progress in developing basic skills, prepare them very well for the next stage of their education.

The continued success of the school is the result of outstanding leadership and management by the headteacher, staff and governors. The reflective and purposeful leadership of the headteacher has ensured that the school is moving forward quickly. The school's motto of 'Together Everyone Achieves More' is reflected in all aspects of its life. The role of subject leaders has been extended significantly in the last year and they support the headteacher well in planning for development and in monitoring provision. This means that there is a very good understanding of the few weaknesses in the school, although self-evaluation tends to be a little cautious in its judgements, reflecting the very high expectations of the headteacher. The school sets itself very challenging targets for improvement and standards continue to rise. There are ambitious plans to develop provision further by providing out-of-hours care and the school is exceptionally well placed to realise its aspirations.

The school works very closely with a range of partners, including other schools, agencies that support travelling families and staff at the army barracks. Parents make a significant contribution to the school's success and there are good plans in place to develop home/school communication further. One parent summed up the views of most by commenting that, 'My children are making fantastic progress and thoroughly enjoy school as they are very happy there'. This comment accurately captures the essence of this very successful school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in the Foundation Stage. Consequently, most children are working at or beyond the expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception Year. Children achieve so well because provision is very well managed and teaching takes close account of children's different starting points to ensure that there are very good levels of challenge in lessons. This is especially noticeable when children are being taught early reading skills in ability groups. At these times, new letter sounds are introduced in a structured way ensuring very good progress, with learning made fun by the use of actions and songs. Adults give children sensitive help throughout the school day. Very good induction systems ensure that children quickly learn new routines when they start school. There is an excellent curriculum that promotes personal skills effectively. The very good range of indoor and outdoor activities encourages children to play together, to cooperate with each other and to develop excellent independence.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise rates of attendance by working with parents to ensure that they all support the school by avoiding unnecessary absences.
- Give pupils more opportunities to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children

Inspection of Arden Forest Infant School, Bulkington, CV12 9RT

Thank you for welcoming me to your school and for showing me your work. You were very polite and friendly and were well behaved. I agree with you that your school is excellent, and that staff do a lot to help you.

Some of the things I found out about your school.

- Excellent teaching helps you to learn new things very quickly throughout the school.
- Younger children get a super start in the Reception Classes, where you work together well and adults plan exciting work for you to do indoors and outside.
- You really enjoy school because adults make learning interesting by planning many fun activities, and by providing many clubs and visits.
- The school is very successful at teaching you how to keep healthy. Your 'seaside day' and 'tea party' sounded like they were great fun!
- Your teachers are very kind and caring; they look after you very well, make lessons fun and gives you lots of help when you need it.
- Your headteacher, teachers and governors lead the school very well and they are working very hard to make the school even better.
- Almost all of your parents and carers are very pleased that you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Work with parents to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.
- Give you more opportunities to practise your writing skills in different subjects.

I thoroughly enjoyed talking to you about your work and watching you learn and I wish you well for the future. You can help the school by trying to make sure you do not miss school unnecessarily.

Yours sincerely,

Mr M Capper Lead inspector



1 November 2007

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