

Alderman Knight School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115825
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	357824
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Blackband

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	84
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Reverend Keith Twining
Headteacher	Clare Steel
Date of previous school inspection	7 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 14 lessons and 12 teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation, including development planning, pupils' performance data and records of governing body meetings. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and with representatives of the governing body. Inspectors also took into account 48 parents' questionnaires, 65 pupils' questionnaires and 23 staff questionnaires.

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

- The apparent differences in progress in some basic skills subjects between pupils in different key stages.
- The standards of teaching across the school in ensuring the progress of all pupils.
- The quality of assessment and target setting for each pupil.
- The effectiveness of leaders at all levels in their monitoring, evaluation and procedures to raise standards further.

Information about the school

The school provides for pupils with a range of learning difficulties including autism, speech, language and communication difficulties and severe learning difficulties. A small proportion of pupils have moderate learning difficulties while the great majority of pupils have complex additional learning needs. Almost all pupils are from a White British background. A very small number have English as an additional language. In 2009, since the previous inspection, the school was awarded specialist status in the field of Communication and Interaction. Besides this, the school has a number of other awards including the Healthy Schools award.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school which has maintained consistent improvement since the previous inspection. Parents are very happy for their children to attend and the pupils greatly enjoy their learning. Standards of care and the safeguarding of pupils are excellent. As a result, the pupils attend regularly and their behaviour is outstanding.

The pupils make good progress in their learning and outstanding progress in almost every aspect of their personal development. The school keeps comprehensive records of pupils' achievement, both in terms of their academic and personal development. This information is rigorously analysed and evaluated and used effectively to ensure all pupils are challenged and supported to do their best. Teaching is good throughout the school and occasionally outstanding. Teachers plan and deliver interesting lessons which the pupils look forward to. The pupils' demonstrate very good attitudes to their learning. They concentrate for long periods and work hard. There are inconsistencies however in the quality of assessment of the pupils' progress within lessons of which the senior team are well aware and which they have prioritised for action. Teachers do not always efficiently record the small steps in learning which the pupils make and this sometimes leads to targets that are not precise enough to enable pupils quickly to take the next little step. This can slow down the pace of learning.

The curriculum is outstanding. It is carefully adapted to the needs of the pupils. As the pupils move through the school, they follow a similar curriculum to that found in mainstream schools. In the last two years of their education pupils follow courses which can lead to qualifications on a variety of levels. Although the complex learning difficulties of most pupils mean that that it is inappropriate to compare their attainment with national expectations, a very few pupils gain GCSE passes while most pupils gain a range of other accredited awards. The school's specialist status has opened up possibilities which the school has been quick to take in, developing a richer provision for pupils with communication difficulties. Extra qualified staff have been appointed to support pupils in speech and language and in improving their English and mathematics skills where necessary. This has resulted in the good progress of all pupils irrespective of their disability.

The improvements have been driven by the expertise and single-minded determination of the headteacher to provide the best for the pupils. She has been supported by staff who are committed to the highest standards. The effectiveness of the governing body has increased substantially since the previous inspection and is now outstanding. Governors rigorously investigate and evaluate provision and challenge the senior team to improve standards. The school continually reviews its practice and the effect on pupils in a well-established cycle. This leads to a culture of unceasing improvement which is accepted and valued by staff, all of whom are fully involved in painstaking and sophisticated analysis of

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the pupils' progress and well-being. As a result, the school has an outstanding capacity for sustained improvement and provides excellent value for money.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the levels of pupils' progress further by using assessment more effectively to:
 - ensure consistency in the recording of the small steps in progress that pupils make
 - apply detailed information to set suitably precise and challenging learning targets for all pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The attainment of most pupils remains very low throughout their time in the school. By Year 11, however, most pupils gain entry level or qualifications that are more basic and a very small minority of pupils with moderate learning difficulties achieve passes in one or more GCSE subjects. Pupils' progress in art, drama and aspects of technology is good and sometimes outstanding. Pupils maintain good progress in basic skills throughout the school. The school's data and scrutiny of pupils' work shows that there are no significant differences in the pupils' progress in different key stages, in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Those with speech and language difficulties make particularly good progress through the strong support and skilled teaching they receive. As a result of good teaching and rigorous analysis of the pupils' performance, there are no groups of pupils or individuals who are allowed to fall behind. This was illustrated in an outstanding poetry lesson for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The teacher ensured that pupils of all abilities understood fully what and how they were to learn. During the lesson, pupils became confident with the printed material. They were well supported where this was appropriate, to express their feelings and to respond to the poem. All pupils made excellent progress and their achievement was carefully noted to ensure the next lesson stretched them even further.

Pupils feel very safe and well for cared well. This was confirmed by parents and by pupils in discussions. This results in relaxed and friendly relationships throughout the school, which has a very positive influence on the quality of pupils' learning. Pupils develop a very strong commitment to staying healthy and the school has gained the national Healthy Schools award. School mealtimes, both at breakfast club and lunchtime, are social occasions characterised by healthy food which pupils enjoy and by excellent table manners and behaviour. Older pupils are very aware of the benefits of exercise and the dangers of smoking and drugs. Pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 have produced a powerful film about teenage pregnancy.

Pupils value the closeness of their school community. They gladly take on responsibilities and older pupils keep a close lookout for younger children. Pupils reach out into the local community through performances in the local theatre and abbey. Throughout their time in the school, pupils are encouraged successfully to learn about their responsibilities as citizens and to take part in activities which benefit the local and wider community. For instance, the school's specialist status has increased the opportunities for pupils to engage and develop links with partner schools and local businesses. The pupils' good progress in basic skills, their above average attendance and their developing experience, in Years 10

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and 11, of working life through appropriate placements with employers, mean they are well prepared for leaving school. All the pupils in recent years have secured college places or further training before they leave.

Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is outstanding. Daily assembly is a powerful spiritual experience and pupils demonstrate many acts of tolerance and understanding of other children's disabilities. During the inspection, older pupils gave a standing ovation to primary children when they performed their Nativity play. They develop a rich experience of a wide range of cultural activities. For instance, they take part in dance workshops and work with visiting artists and this has led to many of them producing excellent sculpture or paintings. There are developing cultural links with a school in China.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	*
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	1
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good. Teachers plan effectively and in the best examples set crystal clear learning objectives which are adapted carefully for each pupil. Standards of planning are however sometimes inconsistent and pupils' targets do not always help them to understand precisely how to improve their work. There are good relationships between

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staff and pupils. Classrooms are happy places where pupils enjoy well-organised lessons taught at a suitably brisk pace. Teachers are skilled at asking questions to establish and promote the learning of pupils of all abilities. Teaching assistants give sensitive and effective support. Because of this, the pupils feel confident to learn new things. They maintain good levels of concentration and their behaviour makes a very strong contribution to their good learning.

The curriculum is outstanding because it is so successful in providing a broad and balanced experience that reflects the individual needs of pupils and ensures a firm focus on developing personal and practical skills. There is a wide range of interventions which are personalised to meet the identified learning needs of some pupils. These effectively support pupils' basic skills and language acquisition as well as help them develop their understanding of good behaviour and social interaction. The staff have very successfully integrated English and mathematics into most other subjects and this reinforces pupils' learning, often in practical situations such as cooking. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visiting artists, sports coaches, musicians and drama specialists as well as by the work of speech and language and occupational therapists. Pupils experience many trips, including residential visits throughout their time in school. This adds greatly to their social and cultural understanding and their self-confidence in a variety of situations. The school's specialist status has significantly increased the opportunities to employ a number of specialist staff and to build productive links with other schools to extend the provision and further raise pupils' achievement.

Care, support and guidance are also exceptional. Pupils know and trust adults and the quality of safeguarding is outstanding. The school is diligent in supporting and challenging pupils to manage their own behaviour. Pupils and parents perceive that the school is calm and secure. The care of pupils in public care is particularly effective. Attendance is very well monitored and has shown year-on-year improvement. Wherever possible the pupils are involved in reviewing and creating their own individual education plan targets. When pupils get ready to leave the school they receive very good careers advice and the school ensures that every pupil has successfully arranged for further education or training.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior team, led extremely well by the headteacher, is very successful in inspiring staff at all levels to share a strong sense of purpose in constantly evaluating and improving provision. Pupils of all ages and abilities get a good deal and equality of opportunity because of the school's determination continually to improve provision for

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every pupil. There is highly rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's work and this high level of self-evaluation means leaders prepare exceptionally clear and focused development planning. Standards of teaching are good and continually improving because the work of teachers is regularly monitored and linked clearly to their performance management and high levels of further training. Leaders are taking very effective steps, for instance in the quality of assessment, to drive up standards further. Members of the governing now provide an outstanding contribution to the work and direction of the school. They monitor all aspects of the school's work, ensuring for example that safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Their innovative and decisive influence has been effective in deciding the future of the proposed new school building.

Relations with parents and carers are very positive and they report that they feel fully confident in the school's work. They are very well informed about the school and their child's progress. The school is highly committed to working in partnerships with other schools and institutions. There are excellent curriculum links with the neighbouring high school whereby pupils from both schools visit for lessons and social meetings. The specialist status has given the school new responsibilities and opportunities to extend the curriculum for the benefit of pupils. The school has audited, evaluated and created good provision to help pupils develop understanding of community cohesion. There are strong local links and the pupils are developing their understanding of the wider cultural, ethnic and religious differences in other countries. There are however gaps in the pupils' awareness of the diversity of people and customs in Britain today.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers overwhelmingly feel the school is a safe and caring place for their child. They are very happy that their child is making good progress because teaching is

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good and the school is well led and managed. A very small proportion expressed dissatisfaction with standards of safety and their ability to communicate with school but these concerns were not borne out by the inspection findings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Alderman Knight 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 84 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	30	63	16	33	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	36	75	10	21	0	0	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	69	13	27	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	33	69	13	27	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	35	73	11	23	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	31	65	16	33	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	58	19	40	1	2	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)	33	69	14	29	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	36	75	10	21	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	65	16	33	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	60	17	35	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	38	79	9	19	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	38	79	9	19	1	2	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.



9 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Alderman Knight School, Tewkesbury GL20 8JJ

Not long ago we visited your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, listening to you singing and talking to you in our meetings and in the classrooms. We enjoyed the Nativity play by the primary department.

You go to an excellent school. Here are some things we particularly liked about the school.

- You make good progress in your work and excellent progress in learning about how to keep safe, about a healthy lifestyle and especially in being in charge of your own behaviour.
- Your lessons are interesting and you have all sorts of exciting trips and visits to look forward to and which help you to be more confident.
- You are very safe and well looked after. All the adults take great care to make sure you are happy and able to learn well.
- Your school is very well run by the headteacher and her staff.

To make the school even better we want the teachers to make sure they write down every bit of progress you make, and use that to give you work which is just right to help you to improve even faster.

You can help your school too by continuing to work hard and behave well.

Yours sincerely

Mel Blackband

Lead inspector

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