

Ashlands CofE First School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123749
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	380721
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
Lead inspector	Alex Baxter

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

Type of school	First
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	106
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Trevor Lowe
Headteacher	Carol Wills
Date of previous school inspection	11 June 2009
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

Inspection team

Alex Baxter

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited 10 lessons taught by four teachers and listened to pupils reading. The inspector also observed break times, attended an assembly and held meetings with representatives of the governing body, staff, pupils, and parents and carers. The inspector took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at plans and policies, records of assessments and the tracking of pupils' progress. The inspector analysed 32 questionnaires completed by parents and carers as well as those returned by 10 pupils and 12 staff.

Information about the school

This school is smaller than the average primary school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils attending the school are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the normal times is also above average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a Reception class. Following an extended period of close partnership, in October 2011 the school became a member of the Crewkerne and Misterton Federation, a hard federation of three first schools. One executive headteacher oversees the work of Ashlands and Misterton, and St Bartholomew's retains its own headteacher. The federation has a shared governing body. A children's centre operates on the school site; it was not part of this inspection.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Ashlands is a good school with a caring village atmosphere, within a town setting. Strengths include shared staff and governing body expertise across the federation, very effective targeting of pupils' differing needs and good provision in Reception and for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Pupils' writing is improving rapidly now, but while satisfactory, the skills of a few pupils in Years 3 and 4 have developed more slowly overtime. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support reading and pupils with complex needs, but are not always used as effectively to help other pupils. These factors contribute to why the school is good rather than outstanding.
- Children develop confidence quickly and make a good start in Reception Year. Pupils progress well through the school, especially in reading, speaking and listening and mathematics, and reach an average level of attainment, reflecting good achievement by the time they leave.
- Teaching is good in all classes and is typified by good questioning and very supportive relationships, although just occasionally lessons lack a little pace. Systematic approaches mean that reading, speaking and listening and basic numeracy and computing skills are taught well. However, pupils' handwriting and sentence punctuation skills are not taught as successfully..
- Inspection shows that parents' and pupils' views of good behaviour and safety are well founded and that the school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. As one parent said, 'My child could not be happier.' Attendance is above average, illustrating pupils' great enjoyment of school and beneficial links with parents.
- Good leadership stems from the talented executive headteacher, ably supported by senior staff and a well-focused governing body. Good management of performance and teaching has lifted provision and outcomes from satisfactory to good since the previous inspection, and demonstrates a good capacity to continue this into the future.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the end of 2012, raise pupils' achievement in writing by the end of Year 4 to at least match that in reading by:
 - more systematically developing pupils' joined handwriting and basic sentence punctuation skills through specifically identifying these aspects as next steps to improve in teachers' marking
 - using pupils' own imaginative texts to model and promote these skills.
- Develop more outstanding teaching, which fully engages all pupils to best effect by:
 - making sure that whole class or large group teaching moves at a fast pace and consistently challenges pupils at the right level
 - extending the role of teaching assistants so that they are more readily deployed to support a wider range of pupils and learning activities.

Main report**Achievement of pupils**

Children in Reception Year make good progress and build successfully on starting points that are often low in relation to those normally expected. Children do best in developing the skills and confidence needed to learn happily and effectively with others. Throughout the school, pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and those arriving later from other schools, make good progress overall. By the time they leave, pupils' attainment is average. Due to incomplete learning in the past, a few pupils, especially in Years 3 and 4, lack suitably developed joined handwriting and punctuation skills. Even so, the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress now in writing is increasing. This is securely the case in reading and mathematics, where because basic skills are systematically developed, pupils are keen to learn and apply themselves well. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoyed the challenge of problem solving and applied their skills and knowledge well to work out the price of a meal from a shopping list. Similarly in Years 1 and 2, pupils showed good breadth of vocabulary when discussing 'The Little Sea Monster's' deep-sea environment.

The school is increasingly successful in assessing, identifying and tackling children's needs at an early age, including pupils who join the school other than at the normal time. By this means the gap between those pupils who find learning difficult and other pupils is closing rapidly. This is especially the case in reading because, from an early age, pupils learn how to blend letter sounds to make words and benefit from the systematic teaching of sounds and letters (phonics) and from regular reading of stories well matched to their ability. Consequently, pupils' attainment in reading is broadly average by the end of Year 2 and just above average by the end of Year 4. For both groups this represents good progress given their different starting points. Parents and carers also agree their children are making good progress and pupils are

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confident they are helped to improve well.

Quality of teaching

Almost all parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire expressed the view that teaching is good. Pupils also say that teaching helps them to learn well. These views are borne out by inspection findings. Strengths in the lessons observed typically included teachers developing new learning well by making connections with previous work, skilfully questioning the pupils to check their understanding and generous use of praise to value their ideas and to encourage sustained interest. Pupils appreciate these features, saying such things as, 'Teachers help us to think more about our work.' Just occasionally, lessons lack sustained pace to fully engage pupils from start to finish. Teachers share ideas with colleagues across the federation and have enriched their assessment skills through well-focused professional development. As a result, lessons are well planned to provide a suitable level of challenge. For example, in guided reading lessons, skills were extended through a range of practical group activities all matched well to pupils' abilities. This resulted in all pupils learning well. Similarly, most mathematics lessons observed involved a lively review of basic numeracy skills followed by pupils being challenged at the right level to use and apply these skills.

The well-planned curriculum adds to the quality of teaching and learning. All teachers make good use of interactive white boards and laptop computers to enthuse pupils, often through cartoon or storybook characters and sequenced counting and spelling games. Individual research, often using computers or books from the well-stocked library and regular visits, including to the school's own Forest School/outdoor woodland area, develop learning well through a range of topics. Such well-planned learning activities across the curriculum make good contributions to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Teachers encourage speaking and listening skills well to promote expressive writing, and mostly give pupils clear information on how to improve when they mark pupils' recorded work. These methods are not always used to best effect, however, to develop pupils' joined handwriting and punctuation skills. Teachers deployed teaching assistants well to support reading and help disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Assistants are not always used as effectively to support other learning activities, including for example, in Reception to support children's own learning choices.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is managed well and is good overall. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour and responses to adults in lessons were often exemplary. Evidence indicates that pupils' behaviour over time has been mostly good. Most parents, carers and pupils feel that there is a good standard of behaviour in the school and that the staff manage behaviour well. There have been very few recorded incidents of poor behaviour in recent years, mostly identified as thoughtless actions rather than bullying. Records show that parents were fully involved and that actions were swift and effective. There was no bullying or unacceptable behaviour seen during the

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inspection. Pupils know about different types of bullying, including name calling and cyber bullying and that such deliberate acts are a wrong thing to do. They said that should it happen, they were confident it would be dealt with effectively. Attendance is above average and reflects the pupils' many friendships and interesting activities enjoyed in class and at playtime. Pupils with behavioural and emotional needs are supported well. This often takes the form of close individual support from an adult, which helps them to improve their social skills. As at the time of the previous inspection, very good relationships and diligent care from staff mean that pupils feel very safe and learn and play confidently in all parts of the school. As one pupil said, 'Adults are really nice to us and we have lots of very good friends.' Staff are also skilled in encouraging pupils to make positive contributions to the school. In particular, members of the school council undertake their responsibilities seriously and make productive contributions, including raising money for charities and to purchase extra play equipment.

Leadership and management

The strong collaborative leadership of the executive headteacher enables staff across the schools in the federation to develop their skills and share these well with each other. In particular, effective performance management leading to well-targeted staff training and improved practice, especially in assessing pupils' needs, has significantly improved the provision for children in the Early Years Foundation stage and disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Overall, effective professional development of staff, now accompanied by similarly broadened expertise and increased training of members of a single governing body, have helped secure good teaching and pupils' learning. This is also evident, for example, in the good improvement since the previous inspection resulting from the systematic development of pupils' reading and mathematics skills. Increased opportunities in lessons to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills to support their writing are reflective of the improving quality of teaching of writing. Alongside improved and now above average attendance, these outcomes show the school's good capacity to improve into the future. Partnership working across the federation has also extended pupils' learning experiences within a good curriculum. By this means topics such as 'Fair Trade' are explored well through cooking activities, assemblies and the school's 'Fair Trade Café' event and also promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. As an inclusive school, leaders and staff at Ashlands eliminate discrimination and sustain good equality of opportunity, as seen in the equally good progress of all groups of pupils. The good work of the governing body, aided by diligent, caring staff also ensures that statutory requirements are fully met to safeguard pupils' welfare. These include child protection, staff recruitment and health and safety checks and beneficial links with parents, carers and outside agencies.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashlands Cof E First School, Crewkerne, TA18 7AL

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to visit recently. I really enjoyed my time in your school and certainly talking to you was a particularly enjoyable feature. You will be pleased to know that I agree with you, and almost all of the parents and carers who responded to their questionnaire, that Ashlands is a good school.

These are some of the things I liked most.

- You make a good start to school in Reception and you achieve well as you move through the school. You make good progress in reading, speaking and listening and mathematics and an increasing number of you are now making even better progress in these aspects.
- Your very friendly relationships and wide range of interesting activities help you to behave well and enjoy learning.
- You receive good teaching that helps you to be interested in what you are doing and encourages you to work hard and want to succeed.
- Everyone in school takes good care of you. This makes you feel very safe and teaches you how to take good care of yourselves.
- Your executive headteacher, staff and governors work well together and provide good leadership and management. They have worked very hard to make sure that your school continues to improve.

To help the school get even better I have asked the teachers to help you improve your handwriting and punctuation and to make sure that all lessons move at fast pace. I have also asked the teachers to help teaching assistants support more of you in class.

You can help to do these things by continuing to work as hard as you can. Thank you again and I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Alex Baxter
Lead Inspector

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