

Anstey First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117218
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338968
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Christopher Gray

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wilfrid Dimsdale
Headteacher	Paul Larkey
Date of previous school inspection	14 November 2006
School address	Anstey Buntingford SG9 0BY
Telephone number	01763 848346
Fax number	01763 849377
Email address	admin@anstey.herts.sch.uk

Age group	4–9
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2010
Inspection number	338968

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

T: 0300 1234 234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. He observed three lessons and both teachers. He also met parents informally and held meetings with groups of pupils, governors and members of staff. He observed the school's work and looked at records of pupils' progress, samples of their work, curriculum plans, the school improvement plan, records of classroom monitoring, school policies and budget data. Fourteen parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- How the new arrangements for the part-time headteacher affect the school's development.
- How successful is the drive to increase the performance of higher attaining pupils in writing.
- How well teachers meet the needs of different ages and abilities, especially in the Key Stage 1 class.

Information about the school

This is a very small, rural school, where all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average; no pupil currently has a statement. There are two classes: one for Reception and Years 1 and 2, the other for Years 3 and 4. There are currently no Year 4 pupils on roll.

There have been two headteachers since the last inspection. The governing body found it difficult to appoint a full-time teaching head and began a new arrangement in April 2010, whereby the headteacher of another local first school has become head of both schools, though they remain entirely separate institutions. He spends 40% of his time at Anstey First School.

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 with a happy, family atmosphere, much appreciated by parents, one of whom typically commented, 'I love everything about this little school, and what is more, so does my child.' Teachers and teaching assistants plan carefully to meet the wide spread of pupils' ages and abilities in both classes. Pupils' needs are well met, enabling them to make good progress in every year group and reach above average standards by the end of Year 2. These good standards are maintained in the Key Stage 2 class. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good and sometimes outstanding progress and attain close to national averages.

Attendance is high. Pupils are very keen to come to school, as all parents who responded to the questionnaire testify. One of the reasons for this is the sense of security and trust, which the pupils so obviously value. Pupils have a good sense of how to keep fit through their diet and virtually all of them have a healthy hot lunch, prepared on the premises. Pupils and adults eat together, producing a relaxing and well-mannered occasion. The Reception children who, at the moment, attend in the afternoons only, join the others for lunch; this helps them settle in well. The ratio of adults to pupils is relatively high and strongly supports pupils' academic progress and personal development. The school is aware, however, that it also needs to do more to foster pupils' independence. Pupils behave well in class and in the playground.

The new arrangements for the leadership of the school are working very well and benefit both the schools led by the headteacher. As well as solving financial and recruitment problems, the schools learn from one another and share their expertise. A current focus for both schools is planning a more creative curriculum, based on pupils' interests and backgrounds. It is designed to link subjects together and offer greater scope for independent learning, such as using research skills. Staff from both schools are engaged in creating a two-year topic cycle and the planning is already partly completed. Pupils enjoy these topics, as seen in the current work on 'Pirates' in Year 3, though there is insufficient time for pupils to reflect on their learning and draw conclusions. Similarly, pupils explained to the inspector that good behaviour is important because of what might happen to them personally if they were naughty, but they found it more difficult to reflect on how the bad behaviour of one person might affect the rest of the class. There are too few opportunities for pupils to assess their own work and that of others.

The quality of teaching is good because it is effective in enabling pupils of all ages to progress well. Good use is made of the outdoor environment for all the pupils in the Key Stage 1 class. Teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and often give pupils pointers as to how to make their work better, but do not always ensure that pupils act on the advice and guidance they are given.

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

In such a small school, teachers have responsibility for leading several subjects. The advantage to the school is that teachers are also aware of whole-school issues, strengths and weaknesses. As a result, self-evaluation is accurate and development planning is ambitious yet realistic. The maintenance of above average standards and the success so far of the work with the partner school show that there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the school's existing plans to increase pupils' independent learning skills, by:
 - carrying out the plans for topics that link learning to pupils' interests and experience
 - giving pupils more opportunities to reflect on their own experiences
 - enabling pupils to evaluate their own and each other's work and to identify how it might be made better
 - ensuring that pupils act on the pointers in teachers' marking as to the next steps they should take

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Even though there is sometimes only one child in a year group, results in the teachers' assessments in Year 2 have been consistently above average in reading, writing and mathematics over a number of years. This included 2010 when half of the cohort had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Standards are maintained as pupils move into Key Stage 2. Most pupils are making good progress, especially in areas where there has been a recent focus, such as higher-attaining pupils, especially boys, in writing. Pupils use their literacy skills well in many subjects. The new curriculum is helping in this. During the inspection, pupils in Year 2 made good progress in designing their own playground games to be used by the whole class. They were then asked to set out the instructions clearly and in order. One boy's rules were very easy to follow, and used good, clear vocabulary, such as: 'When the teacher says "The monster's coming", run to avoid the monster.' The game was then tested and proved so popular that a number of children were playing it again at lunch time.

Pupils say that it is the adults that make them feel so safe in school but, as a Year 3 pupil added, 'Children keep you company if you're worried.' When a group of pupils was asked if there is anything they do not like about school, they were hard pressed to think of anything. The village community benefits from the involvement of the school in local events. Pupils were busy rehearsing for harvest festival and the quality of singing from such a small group was very good. Pupils are proud of their school council, which is made up of one pupil per year group. They have introduced improvements to the outdoor area and are to help this year in evaluating the new curriculum.

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

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	2
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	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
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	1
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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is effective because it is well planned and lessons are increasingly well matched to pupils' interests. In the Key Stage 1 class, very different activities took place at the same time for various groups. The Reception child chose a book to read outside with an adult; groups of Year 2 pupils were writing the rules for their games independently, while others were outside with another adult, devising the rudiments of their game. The teacher worked with Year 1 pupils in sequencing instructions for printing their art work from the computer. The ready availability of adults ensured that pupils' needs were met and that good progress was made. In another lesson, Year 3 pupils were working on three-dimensional shapes. The tasks were closely matched to ability, so that higher-attaining pupils were able to make comparisons about the use of the words 'curved' or 'round' when trying to describe the faces of cylinders and spheres.

Pupils receive good levels of care, guidance and support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities enjoy a real sense of achievement because adults understand their needs closely and tailor their approach accordingly. Pupils know they have targets but are not practised in using them to evaluate their own work or that of their classmates.

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

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's working pattern inspires confidence in his staff because they know that he is always available, even if he is not physically present. The impact of the new arrangements on school development is obvious, from the school environment, newly and extensively refurbished, to the work in developing pupils' independent learning through a new curriculum. Governors have been instrumental in making the shared headship work and speak highly of the valuable support they have received from the local authority. Their involvement in holding the school to account goes down to the level of looking at and questioning the amount of progress made by each pupil. This detailed attention to every individual ensures that pupils have equal opportunities to achieve and that any discrimination is readily tackled.

The school is an important part of the village community and has new links with another village through its partner school, to which Year 3 pupils travel weekly to learn French and physical education. This and other partnerships, such as a sports partnership, are evidence of productive links and of good community cohesion. Pupils experience other religions through visits to places of worship in London and Hertfordshire towns, and governors are making links with schools abroad through the Comenius project. Safeguarding arrangements meet all requirements and display a thoroughness and rigour which ensure that the parents' confidence in the school is well founded.

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

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
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	2
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

There is currently only one child in the Reception class full-time. Three others join the class for the afternoons. Children enter Reception with skills that are broadly similar to the expectations for their age, although slightly lower in the aspects of communication, language and literacy that relate to early reading and writing. The children clearly enjoy their time in school. Adults make frequent observations of children's progress and these are incorporated into each child's 'Learning Journey'. These are frequently consulted by parents and provide detailed records of children's good progress. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed because it is successfully incorporated into the Key Stage 1 class. By the time children enter Year 1, they attain above the national expectations.

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

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

Views of parents and carers

The response to the questionnaire was high. Every parent agreed or strongly agreed with every question, with no dissent. Parents are pleased that their children enjoy school, are safe and make good progress, and the inspector agrees. One parent wrote, 'I am extremely happy that all my children have had the privilege to attend this wonderful school.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Anstey First 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 inspector received 14 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 19 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	11	79	3	21	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	93	1	7	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	93	1	7	0	0	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)	11	79	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	79	3	21	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	10	71	4	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	79	3	21	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.



1 October 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Anstey First School, Buntingford, SG9 0BY

I enjoyed my visit to your school last month and felt that I knew you all by the time I left. Thank you for being so welcoming and for sharing your work with me. The school you go to is among the smallest in the country and this makes it special because it feels like a small family, which your parents like. It is a good school and you told me how proud you are of it. It has lovely grounds, which last year's school council helped to improve - not all schools have so much space.

You told me how safe the adults make you feel and I could see how hard they work so that all of you have the right sort of work to do and are kept busy. I enjoyed listening to you practising your songs for harvest festival, especially the confident person who sang on his own.

Every school has things it would like to do better. The adults in your school have decided that they want to help you to increase your independence. This means that they want you to do and think more for yourselves. I agree that this is the thing the school needs to do. I have asked the teachers to complete the series of topics that you will learn in your whole time at Anstey. They will give you plenty of chances to work on your own, such as the 'Imaginative Gardens' you made recently.

One of the things I have asked adults to help you with is for them to give you more chance to think about and discuss what you have discovered, and to use this in deciding how good your work is. Lastly, when teachers write comments in your book to help you, you can all help by making sure you carry out their suggestions.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Gray

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 1234 234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.