

Ashfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112147
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357052
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Thomson

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	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Kathryn Iilsley
Headteacher	Mr John Ditchburn
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2007
School address	High Street Workington Cumbria CA14 4ES
Telephone number	01900 325256
Fax number	01900 872786
Email address	admin@ashfield-jun.cumbria.sch.uk

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M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed eight teachers and 14 lessons, and held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and analysed 111 questionnaires from parents and carers, 191 from pupils and 12 from staff. The team also looked at documents and policies including those relating to the safeguarding of pupils, information about the pupils' progress and the school's records of its monitoring of the quality of teaching.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Current attainment and progress, particularly the progress pupils make in mathematics and writing and that of higher-attaining pupils.
- In lessons, how effectively teachers challenge pupils of all abilities and use assessment to secure learning.
- The effectiveness of all leaders' monitoring and evaluation to identify and address any underachievement, especially that relating to teaching and learning.

Information about the school

Ashfield Junior School is of average size. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who have a statement of special educational needs is higher than average. The school has a resourced facility for pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The number of pupils served by this specialist provision has greatly reduced and is currently a very small proportion of the total number on roll. The school has Healthy School status for the promotion of healthy lifestyles. Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes in staffing, with a newly restructured leadership team. The headteacher was not present during the inspection. Separate childcare provision shares the school site, but it is not managed by the governing body and is subject to a separate 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: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in pupils' learning, progress and achievement, including that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Ashfield Junior is a happy and cohesive school, popular with pupils, staff, parents and carers. Good features include safeguarding procedures and the engagement with parents and carers. Pupils are polite and welcoming and their behaviour is good. They have a good understanding of a healthy lifestyle and told the inspectors that they feel very safe and happy.

Pupils' attainment, however, has been falling steadily over a number of years. Pupils enter school with attainment that is above average and leave with attainment that is below average resulting in progress being inadequate. This is true of all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who attend the resource facility.

There have been considerable changes in staff since the previous inspection and new appointments have been made. Attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has risen recently and is now close to average. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory overall. A proportion which is good or outstanding helps to secure currently satisfactory progress. However, teaching is not yet strong enough to eradicate pupils' past underachievement.

The school does not share the good practice in teaching well enough at present and in some lessons there is not sufficient challenge for all groups of pupils, including the most able. The use of assessment to support learning is satisfactory, but teachers do not always check during lessons how well all pupils are learning.

All members of staff are very keen to improve the school and have an accurate picture of key areas to develop, such as progress in literacy and mathematics. The leadership team has been strengthened by the recent appointment of literacy and numeracy coordinators. They are playing a significant part in raising attainment in their areas and significant improvement has been seen this year. Leaders at all levels carry out lesson observations and this has resulted in improvements in teaching and learning. However, there is not always a clear enough focus on the learning that is taking place or on previous areas for development. Monitoring and evaluation has improved and is helping to accelerate progress through the identification of underachievement.

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Overall, the school has demonstrated enough improvement in the key issues from the previous inspection and in pupils' progress since September to show it has satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment particularly in reading, writing and mathematics and increase the proportion of good or better teaching by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that already exists
 - always providing learning that is appropriately challenging for all groups of pupils
 - giving pupils independent learning tasks as early as possible in lessons to maximise the opportunity for teachers to check how well individuals are learning
 - always providing clear success criteria so that pupils themselves can assess how well they are learning.
- Sharpen the school's monitoring and evaluation to enable leaders and managers to have a more accurate view of pupils' learning and progress by:
 - focusing closely on learning and on the previous areas for development when observing lessons
 - having clear action plans in literacy and numeracy to ensure that pupils learn basic skills securely and are able to apply them to everyday contexts
 - always providing succinct and clear summary evaluations of monitoring and evaluation so that the governing body has a shared understanding of how well the school is doing.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

4

While learning and progress seen in lessons during the inspection were satisfactory overall, outcomes for pupils are inadequate because of their inadequate learning and progress and hence achievement over time. Pupils' behaviour is good and often contributes well to learning. This was exemplified in a Year 6 English lesson, where pupils worked effectively in pairs to check each other's learning. Progress in reading and writing is rising securely, helped by a focus on higher quality writing at length. Progress in mathematics is improving because of the development of pupils' basic skills and their application in number work. However, there is not enough problem-solving in everyday contexts to help stimulate pupils' interest in mathematics. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with their peers because of the targeted support they receive, often through well-deployed learning support assistants, and is satisfactory in lessons. There is clear evidence of improved learning and progress in lessons and from the scrutiny of pupils' work. However, too often pupils' progress is satisfactory rather than good. Pupils are not always offered opportunities to work independently and this limits the opportunities for regular and meaningful assessments of their learning.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities for taking on responsibilities, such as 'Chill Out Zone' leaders, where they oversee a playground area designated for quiet play. In an assembly, one leader from Year 6 confidently emphasised some of the rules to the whole school. The

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school council plays an effective role in acting as advocates for the other pupils and in organising fundraising for charities. Pupils' average basic skills, including those in information and communication technology, along with their above average attendance, prepare them adequately for their future. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Their spiritual development is a strength, with pupils reflecting appropriately on events such as the recent earthquake in Japan. Pupils' cultural development is improving, aided by their learning about other cultures during religious education lessons.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

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?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and some promotes learning and progress that is good and sometimes outstanding. However, not enough teaching is of a consistently good quality to help eradicate the underachievement and remedy the inadequate progress of the past few years. Some very enthusiastic teaching and interesting activities help engage pupils well. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson, pupils were encouraged to enhance their vocabulary through a role play of Little Red Riding Hood. Although work often caters well for pupils' differing needs, it is not always sufficiently challenging to match the range of pupils' abilities. Teachers usually tell pupils what it is they should be learning, but sometimes the criteria for success are not clear enough for pupils to judge for themselves if they are learning well. Work is regularly

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marked, with appropriate praise and sometimes with comments that help pupils to improve, although this practice is inconsistent across the school.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and are strengths of the school. Pupils are known as individuals and say there is always an adult to whom they can talk. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and make considerable gains in their self-confidence and general well-being. Learning support assistants are shared between classes within a year group. This means that in some lessons not all pupils have enhanced support to help them with their work. However, pupils whose circumstances are likely to make them vulnerable and those in the resourced unit receive good one-to-one support. Strategies to improve attendance have been successful in reducing persistent absenteeism.

The school is developing the creative aspect of its curriculum, with literacy and numeracy beginning to be embedded into other topics, such as 'weather', which also incorporates geography and science. Parents and carers agree that the school prepares pupils well for the next stage in their education. There are some good examples of enrichment activities, including a variety of sporting opportunities that help pupils to adopt good healthy lifestyles. Pupils told the inspectors how much they enjoy Rock Challenge and the opportunity to perform at a sports centre in Carlisle.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have remained determined to improve the school through a period of significant staff instability. The school is a very happy environment, something that the parents and carers recognise. Senior leaders have successfully integrated many new teachers and have brought the staff together so that all are focused on taking the school forward. The embedding of ambition and driving improvement is satisfactory. Responses to questionnaires show that members of staff know and are involved in what the school is trying to achieve. The leadership team has been restructured and strengthened and this has helped to bring about improvements. School leaders and members of the governing body understand the school and are focused on raising pupils' achievement. Many of the strategies are beginning to prove effective, such as more frequent monitoring of individual pupils' underachievement. Leadership and management of teaching are satisfactory. However, the school recognises that lesson observations need to focus more closely on learning. Currently, the school does not offer satisfactory value for money because of the inadequate outcomes for pupils.

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Safeguarding is good, with clear up-to-date policies and secure risk assessments. The school has been successful in implementing a no-tolerance attitude to racist behaviour and bullying. This, along with all groups of pupils making rapid and secure progress in lessons, indicates that the equality of opportunity is satisfactory. Engagement with parents and carers has improved and is good. Parents recognise recent improvements and comment favourably on the 'Maths Passport' in helping them to support their children's learning. Partnerships are satisfactory and some are good, for example, sporting partnerships with other schools and local clubs help the pupils appreciate the benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle. Community cohesion within school and locally is satisfactorily promoted. The further planned links with schools nationally and internationally are yet to be fully established. The governing body is increasingly effective and offers satisfactory support and challenge to the school.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Views of parents and carers

Over 50% of parents and carers returned their questionnaires. This is higher than average for a junior school. The vast majority of parents and carers were positive about all aspects of the school. Almost all agreed that the school keeps their child safe and that their child enjoys school. The inspectors judged that the extent to which pupils felt safe was good and the pupils' enjoyment was very evident during their visit.

A few parents and carers did not agree that the school deals well with unacceptable behaviour. The inspectors followed up this concern. The pupils told them that this was something that the school did well and inspectors found behaviour and its management to be satisfactory. A few parents and carers did not agree that the school was led effectively. The inspectors judged that leaders were embedding ambition and driving improvement satisfactorily, but that improvement could be happening more quickly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashfield Junior 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 111 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 218 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	62	56	47	42	2	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	63	57	47	42	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	47	42	59	53	5	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	39	57	51	7	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	46	53	48	5	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	44	40	58	52	8	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	36	66	59	4	4	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)	44	40	53	48	4	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	41	58	52	7	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	39	35	60	54	7	6	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	38	60	54	3	3	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	52	47	48	43	8	7	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	55	40	36	5	5	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	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Ashfield Junior School, Workington, CA14 4ES

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for talking to us about what you do. It was good to see that you enjoy school and that you know how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise. You get on well with your teachers and other adults in school and you are right to say that they look after you and make sure that any concerns you have are dealt with. This keeps you safe in school and helps you understand how to stay safe outside school.

Those who lead and manage your school do so satisfactorily. However, the inspectors are concerned that the progress you make has only recently become satisfactory and we want you to catch up rapidly on any learning you have missed. In particular, we would like you to make faster progress in your reading, writing and mathematics. We have, therefore, given the school a 'notice to improve.' This means that inspectors will visit you again in the future to make sure that improvements have been made.

We have asked your headteacher and the governing body to improve the pace of your learning by:

- helping your teachers to share with each other the things that they do well
- allowing you to work independently in lessons as soon as possible to allow for good opportunities for teachers to check your learning
- asking your teachers to give you ways of judging how well you are learning while you are working
- observing your lessons more often to check on your progress.

You can all help by letting your teacher know if you are unclear about how well you are doing.

We would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Thomson

Lead Inspector

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