

Ash Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110261
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	378071
Inspection dates	13–14 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Philip Scull

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	174
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Miss Sarah Clarke
Headteacher	Mrs Jennifer Gamble
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 June 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons taught by eight different teachers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation relating to pupils' progress, their work in books, monitoring records and the school's planning information. Parents and carers were spoken to on the playground and meetings held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Questionnaires completed by pupils, staff and 68 parents and carers were analysed.

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

- The quality of the start provided for children in the Reception Year and its effectiveness in developing early communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- How well teaching and the curriculum are accelerating progress and raising standards from the start of Year 1 to the end of Year 6, particularly in English and mathematics.
- How well pupils are able to take responsibility and initiative as learners, and the impact this has on their progress and attainment.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers in evaluating provision, including new initiatives, making improvements and driving up attainment and progress.

Information about the school

Ash Hill Primary School is smaller than average. An above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, and almost half of these pupils are at an early stage of learning English. A well above average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, mainly moderate learning, speech and language or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is much higher than average. There was a significant turnover of teaching staff two years ago, although staffing is now stable. There is a Children's Centre on site, but it is not run by the governing body and was inspected separately. The school provides for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. It is improving rapidly because weaknesses in teaching and in the curriculum have been resolved, and many aspects of its work are now good. Staffing appointments in recent years have proved a turning point in changing the learning culture of the school. One parent wrote: 'Ash Hill school has improved greatly in the past couple of years.' This view was echoed by an overwhelming majority of parents and carers, staff and governors and confirmed during the inspection. The dynamic headteacher and her leadership team have created a learning environment where all members of the school community feel valued and engaged. Leaders and managers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and the areas where it needs to improve. Previous weaknesses have been tackled effectively. The improving picture is the result of a number of factors. These include:

- rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning that ensures whole-school consistency
- sharply focused planning and effective use of assessment data
- effective staff training and links with other organisations
- high-quality support from the local authority and outside consultants
- a largely new governing body that provides informed support and challenge.

The quality of teaching is now consistently good throughout the school. Although it is taking time to overcome a legacy of below-average attainment, pupils' achievement and the progress they make are improving rapidly. The school is demonstrating good capacity for sustained improvement.

This is a happy, safe and well-run school. Pupils greatly appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive and enjoy school. One pupil said: 'There are plenty of clubs and the lessons are fun and give you a real challenge and prepare you for your future.' Effective support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language ensures that their progress matches that of other pupils. Behaviour is good due to the strong relationships evident between staff and pupils and the consistent application of a whole-school policy. The school has worked hard to ensure pupils attend regularly, and although overall attendance is now satisfactory, persistent absenteeism has a detrimental impact on achievement for some pupils.

Teachers use information from assessment effectively to set tasks that are matched

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to the needs and abilities of different groups of learners. The good teaching motivates pupils and is instrumental in improving achievement. All teachers ensure that pupils know and understand the learning objective for each lesson and discuss the success criteria, although pupils are not sufficiently involved in establishing and contributing to these success criteria so that they are made more responsible for their own learning. The good curriculum is based on a thematic approach that has extended the range of experiences available to pupils and stimulates the development of their language. Despite the rapid improvements in teaching and the curriculum over the last two years, attainment in writing, particularly by boys, and in calculation, remains a relative weakness. The school has improved pupils' progress in the acquisition of basic skills by providing them with a good range of opportunities to apply their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. However, these are not always focused well enough on developing specific independent learning skills.

About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build upon the improvement in pupils' progress in order to raise attainment further in English and mathematics, by:
 - improving pupils' ability to apply their mathematical calculation skills to solve real-life number problems in different contexts
 - challenging pupils, especially boys, to independently select the most appropriate style of writing to express their ideas across the curriculum.
- Involve pupils during lessons in identifying exactly what they will need to do in order to be successful in meeting the learning intention.
- Improve attendance by:
 - exploring and expanding the range of activities to promote good attendance and reduce persistent absence
 - making sure the school promotes the importance of good attendance with parents and carers, especially the parents and carers of pupils who are persistently absent.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Pupils have positive attitudes towards learning. They are keen to do their best and show an eagerness to contribute in lessons. They listen attentively and persevere for extended periods while working. They take pride in their school and in the presentation of their work. Attainment on entry is low but improvements in progress throughout the school resulted in pupils leaving Key Stage 2 last year with broadly average levels of attainment. Pupils' achievement over time is satisfactory and improving. The school's own assessment data and evidence gathered during the inspection show that all groups of learners, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making much better progress than previously in

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lessons because teaching is good at all key stages.

Pupils’ enjoyment of school is apparent. Pupils enter happily and settle to work quietly and enthusiastically. One pupil said: ‘I love coming to school because the grown-ups are kind to us and help us learn.’ They say they feel safe in school and are very aware of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Healthy snacks are evident at playtime and pupils show a good awareness of harmful foods. Many pupils participate in the wide range of clubs available and an active school council gives the pupils a voice and a sense of responsibility. The quality of assemblies is good and pupils show knowledge and awareness of a wide range of cultures. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Their satisfactory and improving basic skills in literacy and numeracy ensure that pupils are suitably equipped for the next stage of their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes

Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers make good use of interactive whiteboards to engage learners and lessons proceed at a good pace. Classroom routines are consistent so that pupils feel secure and know exactly what is expected of them in lessons. Teachers show enthusiasm and use questioning and modelling of work effectively to clarify learning. A Year 6 science lesson on forces enthused pupils as they were involved in active learning that reinforced and extended their knowledge and understanding.

The school has designed an exciting curriculum. Initiatives include a recently

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

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introduced phonics programme to teach pupils the links between sounds and letters and there is great consistency in the way that the teaching of early reading and speaking skills is being developed. This is of particular benefit to pupils who are in the early stages of learning English. The curriculum is considerably enhanced by a wide range of clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils were particularly motivated by the visit of a blind adventurer who recounted his experiences. Cross-curricular links are good but pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their basic skills independently in investigative work.

Good levels of care, support and guidance mean that pupils work in a supportive environment where every pupil is known and valued as an individual. Half-termly meetings involving senior leaders, the inclusion manager and each class teacher ensure that the progress of every individual pupil is carefully monitored and appropriate actions are taken to tackle any barriers to learning. As a result, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those known to be eligible for free school meals make progress in line with other pupils. The school provides good pastoral support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and their families. Teaching assistants provide good support for pupils during work activities but are inconsistently used to support pupils during teaching inputs. There are good transition arrangements and partnerships with the local secondary school.

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 and her team provide strong leadership with an unrelenting focus on improving achievement and attainment. Weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum have been systematically addressed, changes implemented and improvement driven forward. There is a close partnership with the members of the governing body, most of whom have joined the school in recent years, and there is a sense of collaborative teamwork throughout the school. The governing body has a good knowledge of the school and current priorities and has constructed its own development plan linked to school improvement. The improvements in governance, however, are too recent to show a full impact.

The promotion of equality of opportunity is evident in the good levels of care and support provided for every pupil. The many improvements in the school have included all groups of pupils, so that none is disadvantaged and all make satisfactory and improving progress. Safeguarding procedures and training are of good quality

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and are systematically reviewed, taking into account the views of parents and carers. Thorough checks are carried out on all staff and visitors and comprehensive risk assessments are carried out on pupils' activities. The school takes care to identify and support pupils who may be at risk.

The promotion of community cohesion is good and the school has a clear understanding of its context. Excellent links have been established with the local community and this is reflected in the extremely positive attitudes of parents and carers. National links are good but the global dimension is not as well developed. The school community greatly appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and staff, and the school has done much to engage with parents and carers through curriculum workshop sessions and a day-to-day open door policy.

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	3
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	3
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	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start school, their language, social and mathematical skills are below expected levels for their age group. Recent improvements in teaching and outdoor access are appropriately developing early communication, reading, writing and mathematical skills. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage has a clear view of developments needed and carefully monitors the progress of all children from their starting points, promoting strengths and tackling weaknesses. Past weaknesses in provision and leadership are being systematically addressed but the recent nature of improvements means that children are still making satisfactory progress in all areas of learning. The good teaching seen during inspection is increasing this rate of progress as activities are now well matched to the needs of children. The children are happy, settled and willing to take part in all activities. The outdoor environment has been improved since the last inspection and the children now have easier access

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to outdoors and better opportunities for their creative and physical development. Good links with the feeder pre-school and the on-site Children’s Centre help to ensure a smooth start to school. Adults are well deployed to support learning and the welfare of the children. Transition arrangements as children enter Year 1 are effective in providing continuity of learning and support.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of those who responded are very satisfied with the school and every aspect of its work. Many positive comments were also received about how much their children enjoy school and about the approachability of the staff. Parents and carers appreciate the levels of support that their children receive and the sense of community at the school. There were no negative comments, and parents and carers on the playground commented very favourably upon the school and the helpfulness of the staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ash Hill Primary 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 174 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	59	26	38	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	42	62	26	38	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	53	32	47	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	34	41	60	3	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	32	47	35	51	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	47	35	51	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	41	38	56	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)	34	50	32	47	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	32	47	33	49	3	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	30	44	35	51	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	29	43	38	56	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	32	47	36	53	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	39	57	28	41	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 8 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



15 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ash Hill Primary School, High Wycombe HP13 7HT

Thank you for the welcome that you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit because your school has such a friendly and welcoming atmosphere. You were keen to talk to us and tell us how much you like your school and the adults that work with you each day. Thank you to the pupils that filled out the survey forms; this really helped us to find out about your school and how well it is doing.

Your school gives you a satisfactory education, and it has improved a lot in the last three years because your headteacher and her team have done so many things to make it better. Your teachers and teaching assistants care about you, help you to learn and provide you with interesting lessons. As a result of this, you are all making better progress. You have many exciting visits and visitors to your school and enjoy all the clubs that are provided. We were impressed by your good behaviour and the way you listen so well in lessons. Make sure you maintain this positive attitude and always try to do your very best in every single lesson. Practise your reading, writing and mathematics skills as often as you can at home too, with your family if you can.

We have asked the school to improve three things. You are trying hard with your writing and standards are rising, but they could be even better, and boys in particular need to improve the quality of their writing. Also, we have asked your teachers to give you opportunities to think for yourselves when solving number problems or using your writing skills. Most of you are brilliant about making sure you attend school regularly, but some of you need to make sure you come to school every day so you don't miss out on your learning.

Your parents and carers are very pleased with how the school is run and they have noticed how good it is becoming. Make sure you do all that you can to help make your school get even better.

Yours sincerely

Philip Scull
Lead inspector

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