

Ashleigh Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113386
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	378691
Inspection dates	12–13 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Rowena Onions

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11 years
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	225
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zoe Marsh
Headteacher	Mark Henderson
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 July 2009
School address	Bevan Road Barnstaple EX32 8LJ
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Age group	3–11 years
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Twelve lessons were observed and eleven teachers were seen teaching. Meetings were held with pupils, governors and staff. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at data about pupils' progress. In addition, inspectors considered the school improvement plan, reports from the School Improvement Partner and a range of other documentation. Fifty-four responses to the parental questionnaire were received and analysed, together with 133 pupil and 16 staff responses to their respective questionnaires.

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

- The progress pupils make in English, especially in writing.
- The impact of teaching and the curriculum in helping higher-attaining pupils to make good progress.
- The effectiveness of care, guidance and support in helping pupils to develop personally.
- The effect of shared leadership, including governance, on school improvement.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves its local area in Barnstaple. Almost all pupils are of White British origin. Only a very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. A well above average percentage of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including moderate learning, and speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are taught in mixed-age classes.

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

Ashleigh is a good school. The good leadership and management of the school, and especially the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, have created a strong staff team which has caused the school to make significant improvements. As a result, pupils' attainment has risen since the last inspection and is now securely average. Within this, pupils do particularly well and have improved well in their reading and mathematics. This is a direct result of leaders' detailed and accurate self-evaluation and good improvement planning. Staff and governors work together as a team to improve the education provided and there are numerous examples of the success of this work. Parents and carers are very positive about the school. These many positive factors combine to demonstrate that the school has good capacity to sustain its improvement.

Outstanding care, guidance and support, together with good teaching, enable pupils to achieve well. Children are given a very secure start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good progress in reading and mathematics is well established. Progress in writing, although now good, is not as well established and, as a result, pupils' attainment is not yet consistently above average. In particular, there is a much smaller percentage of pupils attaining higher levels in writing than in reading and mathematics.

Staff have high expectations of their pupils and successful initiatives have been introduced to ensure that pupils know what to do to live up to these expectations. As a result, pupils, particularly in Key Stage 2, know the importance of listening to others, of giving opinion and of being self-critical about their work. There is mutual respect evident between staff and pupils. In part because of this, and in part because the school is outstandingly good at supporting individuals, pupils feel exceptionally safe and secure in school, allowing them to relax and enjoy learning. Pupils are fiercely proud of their school, for example commenting, 'Ours is the very best school anywhere', and they find it hard to identify ways in which it could be improved.

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers use their good subject knowledge, combined with imaginative use of resources, to interest and inspire pupils. Good pupil management means that pupils can work with concentration and at good pace. Teachers deploy skilled teaching assistants well to the benefit of all, but with particular success in the support of lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. During the inspection, however, occasionally lessons in Years 1 and 2 were over ambitious in terms of teachers'

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expectations of the capacity of the younger pupils to listen. As a consequence of this, some pupils found it harder to complete complex tasks independently and this meant that their progress was satisfactory rather than good.

The use of assessment to ensure that pupils are aware of what they are learning and of how they will recognise that they have succeeded is very well developed. Feedback given in class helps pupils understand how well they are doing and the school's strategy for setting targets at the beginning of a new piece of work and assessing work against these is very helpful in helping pupils target their efforts. However, teachers' marking is not always showing pupils exactly where and how they could improve their work; this is why assessment is good rather than outstanding.

The school's curriculum successfully promotes good progress. The development of strategies to improve pupils' ability to speak and listen is a particularly strong feature. The school is working with increasing success to develop a curriculum and teaching strategies to improve the content of pupils' writing, although there is more to do on this.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make consistently good progress, especially by ensuring that pupils can work independently and effectively on more complex tasks.
- Raise attainment in writing, including increasing the percentage of pupils in each year group who attain higher levels, by:
 - giving pupils more precise information about where and how they could improve when marking their work
 - raising levels of attainment in spelling, handwriting and presentation by the end of the academic year 2012/13.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Strategies to improve attainment in reading and mathematics have been especially successful. Pupils make good progress from starting points that are lower than expected for their age; and currently an above average percentage of pupils are reaching expected and higher levels of attainment in these subjects. Work to improve the content of pupils' writing is showing success, but more is needed to lift the achievement of all pupils, including that of the most able, in writing. Standards of spelling, handwriting and presentation are correctly identified for further improvement and work is planned to address these aspects.

Pupils really enjoy school and they behave well in class and around the school. Their politeness and respect for the views of others make a significant contribution to their ability to learn. In a Year 5 English lesson, for example, pupils were able to refine their predictions about the content of a book by discussing and sharing the words

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that were brought to mind by looking at a front cover. Pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, work cooperatively as well as individually with focus and perseverance. All pupils show good attitudes to work, which includes aspiring to do well. They are well prepared for their future lives.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties are very successfully supported to make good progress, as are those who enter the school after the Reception year. Pupils’ day-to-day demeanour, the way they treat each other and the way they are anxious to make contributions to ensuring their school community runs well all demonstrate their very good spiritual, moral and social development. Their cultural knowledge is satisfactory and leaders are working successfully to further enhance this in the drive to make spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstanding in the future. Pupils are physically active and know the importance of this in keeping fit and healthy. Strong personal, social and emotional education, which permeates the whole day, means that they develop strategies to promote good emotional health. Although pupils are well aware of how to eat healthily, they are honest in admitting that they are not always as good at applying this to their everyday lives as they could be.

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	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils’ behaviour	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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The way in which teachers consistently seek to develop pupils’ speaking and listening skills is a key factor in the improvement of both mathematics and English. Pupils are encouraged to talk with each other to clarify their ideas, for example, when younger

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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pupils discussed why two characters in a book were feeling sad when they had upset their friend. This strategy means that pupils, many of whom enter school with poor language development, not only develop communication skills, but also develop their language to enable deeper thinking. Teachers use questioning in a skilled way to ensure the ongoing understanding of their pupils and to adjust their teaching where there is a need. Initiatives to develop the use of targets to help pupils know how to improve their work are being successful. For example, the way pupils are taught to analyse work through assessing their own and other pupils’ work means that they are more aware of what constitutes success and of how to apply this to their work. There are examples of very precise marking which tells pupils what they can do to improve, shows them specific places where this can be done and time and opportunity for improvements to be made. Pupils appreciate this strategy where it is applied; however, this type of marking is not consistently used throughout the school.

The school ethos to ensure that each and every individual develops personally as well as educationally is very evident throughout the day and permeates the curriculum. The provision for higher-attaining pupils has been successfully improved in reading and mathematics, but the impact of this work is not yet fully evident in writing. The school continues to work to improve this. Pupils, including the most vulnerable, are actively and exceptionally well supported. The school is particularly successful in helping pupils who have had difficulty settling into other schools to do well. Although, overall, the curriculum is successful in promoting good achievement, the way the day is organised for the pupils in Years 1 and 2 is not currently enabling the best use of pupils’ time. Outstanding care, guidance and support contribute significantly to pupils’ personal development and well-being. School leaders have also had great success in increasing rates of attendance, which are now rapidly improving. They have also ensured that transition arrangements both for when pupils first join the school and when they go on to secondary school are extremely well coordinated; this is much valued by pupils and by parents and carers.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders, in particular the headteacher, are very skilled at communicating a clear vision for the school in a way which galvanises staff to work hard to further improve the education provided. Very rigorous monitoring underpins the headteacher’s and senior staff’s knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the

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school. With careful prioritisation, the school is moving effectively towards high aspirations in all subjects. Leaders’ decision to give priority to developing content in writing was sensible; however, they are aware that it is important that the improvement of the more secretarial aspects of writing become a focus of improvement work.

The school plays a good part in preparing the pupils to become good citizens, both through the strong school community and in the way pupils are encouraged to help improve the local area, for example, participating in a local ‘litter pick’. The need to strengthen provision for the development of community cohesion, especially in developing pupils’ wider understanding of the community in the United Kingdom, has been recognised and good plans are in place to enable this. Links with parents and carers are productive and they are fully informed about their children’s progress. Partnerships with a wide range of other schools and professionals are used well to support individuals and to broaden the curriculum.

Governors are knowledgeable and proactive. Their monitoring of the school is correctly focused on the priorities identified in the school improvement plan, for example, looking at the provision made for pupils with dyslexia, but also extends to other issues, for example, monitoring the progress of the small number of pupils who have English as an additional language. These activities also demonstrate the governors’ close attention to ensuring good equality of opportunity for all. Discrimination, in any form, is not tolerated.

Safeguarding is given good attention, with the personal well-being of the pupils being given high priority. The school site poses difficulties to manage but successful efforts are made to do this, with a special emphasis on the continuous scrutiny and maintenance of site security. The needs of vulnerable pupils are very well met and there is rigorous attention to the safe recruitment of staff.

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	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2
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2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The two days of the inspection coincided with the first two days of school for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, with more than half attending the school for the first time. The children entered a new combined Nursery and Reception unit, which is now housed in two temporary classrooms. Given the circumstances, the children were remarkably well settled, showing the strength of induction procedures and the skills of staff in providing the children with a warm, welcoming and well-planned environment. Curriculum planning and evidence of assessments made last year show that the provision is good and plans are in place to strengthen it still further, for example, through the creation of a larger area for outdoor activities. The smooth transition from the arrangements last year to the current one demonstrates the effectiveness of leadership and management. Over the last year, other improvements have been made in the curriculum provided and in the quality of teaching. This has resulted in a marked increase in progress and in the attainment of the children at the end of the year. By the end of last year many of the children who entered Nursery and Reception with skills and knowledge below those of children of a similar age met the expectations for their age, and some were exceeding these.

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

Views of parents and carers

A smaller-than-average number of parents and carers returned the inspection questionnaire. This was in part due to the number of parents and carers whose children were attending school for the first time on the first day of the inspection. The vast majority of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire or who spoke with inspectors during the inspection are very happy with the education provided for their children. They are particularly positive about the way their children are kept safe. They also like the good quality of teaching their children receive and the way the school is led and managed. Inspectors agree with these positive views. A small number of parents and carers feel unacceptable behaviour is not well managed. Inspection findings are that most pupils behave well and that there are good systems for ensuring this.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashleigh Church of England 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 225 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	34	63	18	33	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	63	20	37	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	22	41	30	56	0	0	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	25	46	27	50	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	32	59	21	39	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	29	54	24	44	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	28	52	25	46	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	26	48	26	48	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	27	50	24	44	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	43	25	46	4	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	21	39	29	54	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	24	44	28	52	0	0	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	36	67	16	30	1	2	1	2

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 08 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.



14 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashleigh Church of England Primary School, Barnstaple, EX32 8LJ

We really enjoyed our time in your school and one of the highlights was talking to you. You will be pleased to know that we agree with you that yours is a good school.

These are some of the things we found to be the best.

- You make good progress in reading and in mathematics.
- You behave well, work hard and want to succeed.
- You are good at working together and supporting each other.
- You receive good teaching that helps you to be interested in what you are doing.
- Everyone in school takes outstandingly good care of you. This makes you feel very safe and teaches you how to take good care of yourselves.
- Your headteacher, other staff and the governing body have worked hard to make improvements to the education you receive.

To make things even better we have asked your headteacher, governors and teachers to do these things:

- make sure that those of you in Years 1 and 2 always make good progress and make the best use of your time during the day
- help you to improve your writing by:
 - making sure that more of the teachers' marking shows you exactly where and how you can improve your writing
 - improving your spelling, handwriting and presentation.

You can help to do these things by continuing to work as hard as you can.

Thank you again for the way you made us feel so at home in your school. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Rowena Onions
Lead inspector

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