

# Ashford Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115921
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hampshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379170
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Keith Sadler

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	134
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Steve Fearon
<b>Headteacher</b>	Helen Borley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 September 2008
<b>School address</b>	Ashford Hill Thatcham Berkshire RG11 8BB
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed eleven lessons led by six different teachers and practitioners. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation. This included the school's analysis of pupils' progress, teachers' lesson plans, the school improvement plan, leaders' monitoring records and pupils' work. Questionnaires from 101 parents and carers, from staff and from pupils in Key Stage 2 were analysed and their responses taken into account.

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

- Inspectors analysed pupils' progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6, and whether the current Year 6 pupils are on track to attain their targets.
- They explored the provision for and the strength of the progress in learning of more-able pupils.
- Inspectors considered whether the pace of learning is sufficiently brisk and whether work set is suitably challenging for all groups of pupils.
- The extent of the role that teachers with responsibilities play in the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures were investigated.

## Information about the school

Ashford Hill is much smaller than the average primary school. A very large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. Most of these pupils have learning or behavioural and social difficulties. An above-average proportion of pupils join or leave the school at other than the normal time for transfer. There are five mixed-age classes. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage share a class with some of the Year 1 pupils.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 following a period of one year in which an interim headteacher held the post. The school has gained the Healthy Schools award.

**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

Ashford Hill is a good school which has a very positive and inclusive ethos. Pupils flourish in both their personal and academic development due to good relationships at all levels, as a result of good care and good teaching. Many pupils say how much they enjoy coming to school. Behaviour is good, pupils' attitudes are positive and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. By the time that they reach Year 6, pupils are thoughtful and reflective young people who have high self-esteem and are prepared well for their move to secondary education and life beyond.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, and many say that they are pleased to have chosen it for their children. Their views are summarised by the parent who wrote: 'My daughters have learned from a caring, supportive, positive 'firm but fair' foundation, where they have felt valued and recognised as individuals. I'm proud to have children at the school.'

Pupils achieve well. Many of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Currently, all groups of pupils are making good progress, and current Year 6 pupils are on course to attain standards that are high in both English and mathematics. Even so, pupils' skills in applying their good mental calculation skills in practical and investigational mathematics are more limited.

Teaching is consistently good in all key stages and teachers successfully identify and meet pupils' needs. Because relationships are good and pupils are managed well, a calm and purposeful atmosphere prevails in all five classrooms. Although there have been significant improvements in teachers' use of assessment since the previous inspection, some inconsistencies remain. Staff have succeeded in making pupils more independent in their learning. One feature of this is the way that teachers get pupils to assess their own work. Even so, the strategies used, particularly for older pupils, are not sufficiently sophisticated, and are often limited to the use of thumbs to show whether they understand the learning objectives or not. Furthermore, older pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to move to the next level, because marking, particularly in mathematics, does not steer pupils' future learning sufficiently clearly.

The new headteacher provides good leadership and management and she is very well respected by parents, carers and pupils alike. Questionnaire responses singled the headteacher out for commendation in terms of her approachability and also of

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how she has managed changes in the school so well. Leaders work well together and the staff all contribute fully to the school's thorough and accurate self-evaluation procedures. The provision is regularly reviewed and, because pupils' progress is tracked carefully and well, staff are in a strong position to ensure that provision is adapted for any pupils in danger of slipping behind. The school improvement plan sets challenging targets to accelerate learning for all groups of pupils. These positive features demonstrate the school's good capacity to sustain further improvement.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Lift the quality of teaching and learning from good to outstanding by:
  - strengthening the application of pupils' calculation skills in practical and investigative mathematics
  - providing more sophisticated opportunities for pupils in Key Stage 2 to be involved in the assessment of their learning
  - ensuring that pupils are clear about what they need to do to improve their work to reach the next level.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils show great pride in the accomplishment of tasks, present their work neatly and take full advantage of the opportunities to work collaboratively and cooperatively. In a good English lesson, for example, pupils were learning about persuasive writing. The teacher showed a clip of a skate park created inside a church. The pupils responded thoughtfully and enthusiastically about this innovation and, working in pairs and small groups, planned high quality letters to the parochial church council to provide their viewpoint. Learning is good in all classes because teaching is consistently good. Current Years 5 and 6 pupils are on course to attain much higher standards than in the last two years. For example, of the current Year 6 pupils, over half are already attaining standards expected at the end of Year 6 in both English and mathematics and a third have already reached the higher level. Inspection findings confirm the school's data that all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or difficulties, make good progress, particularly in reading and writing.

Pupils say that they feel safe in school and this is reflected in the views of parents and carers, who were unanimous in this area. Pupils have confidence in the adults around them. They feel that their ideas are listened to, for example through the activities of the school council. The pupils are proud of their involvement in charity work. During the inspection, for example, pupils made cakes and biscuits for sale in aid of a national charity. Older pupils enjoy leading the Friday celebration assemblies. Pupils have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and this is reflected in the school gaining the Healthy Schools award.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	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
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Pupils say that they enjoy lessons because, ‘Our teachers make learning fun and they give us lots of interesting things to do.’ Teachers take care to make learning exciting, and to make the curriculum appealing, with a variety of visits and visitors. Whole school themes, such as the current focus on modern Britain, enliven learning. Topics are planned well to ensure that work across a range of subjects is integrated to make learning more meaningful. Years 5 and 6 pupils talked enthusiastically, for example, about their visit to a local army museum, which was used as a springboard for their topic. Older pupils have completed good quality work which successfully links history, information and communication technology and literacy when completing journalistic writing following a showing of clips of the film, ‘The Horses sent to War’. Pupils used the new laptops successfully to aid their writing. In one lesson, the class teacher successfully linked a design and technology session, in which pupils were making model houses, to their mathematics focus on two- and three-dimensional shapes. The teacher drew critical information from the pupils about the properties of cubes and the pupils used this knowledge to produce good quality models.

Lessons are well structured, teachers’ subject knowledge is good and resources are often used effectively to enhance learning. Although previous assessments are used well to pitch work at levels which provide good challenge for all pupils, teachers do not involve them in reviewing their work sufficiently thoroughly. Nonetheless, learning is good in most lessons and is aided by teachers’ good questioning skills. The pace of learning is brisk with teachers providing good and engaging explanations of some difficult concepts.

<sup>1</sup> 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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Provision for more-able pupils has improved since the previous inspection and supports their good progress. Weekly visits from scientists and engineers from the nearby Atomic Weapons Establishment, as well as weekly visits to the nearby secondary school for mathematics lessons, enhance these pupils’ learning. In addition, focused teaching groups ensure that work is generally set at a challenging level. Provision for those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is good because their needs are identified early and good quality programmes of support are devised to enable them to make good progress towards their individual targets.

Good care, guidance and support systems have resulted in pupils’ good behaviour and positive attitudes. The school liaises well with specialists and outside agencies to find appropriate support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those with particular special educational needs and/or disabilities. Because of the warm and supportive ethos, the many pupils that join the school after the Reception Year say that they soon settle in, and that they appreciate the concern shown for them by their classmates.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The school is forging ahead under the well-organised and aspirational leadership of the headteacher. Staff know that their views are valued and their contributions appreciated. The senior leadership team is clear about what needs to be improved and has ensured that progress is accelerating and attainment on track to be much higher than in the past two years. In addition, all the staff, who hold multiple responsibilities in this small school, carry out their duties effectively and make a good contribution to the effective monitoring and evaluation procedures. A well-tailored programme of professional development activities is in place to support school improvement priorities. In addition, training for teaching assistants, clearly focused on supporting pupils with the wide range of special educational needs in the school, ensures that staff are able to support these pupils’ needs.

Governance is effective and members of the governing body know what needs to be developed further. They hold school leaders to account well and ensure that all statutory requirements are met. They are assiduous in ensuring that pupils are safeguarded well, and that child protection and staff vetting procedures are

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comprehensive and robust. Pupils’ health and safety and their well-being are also managed well. The promotion of equal opportunities is good. Almost all groups make similarly good progress in their learning, and the school is quick to spot any gaps in achievement between particular groups. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

The school is itself a cohesive community. There are good links with the local community such as when the school united with local organisations to fund shelter boxes following the Japanese tsunami. The school also enables pupils to learn about ways of life elsewhere in the world by means of the links it has established with a school in Uganda.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children’s skills when they join the Reception class vary each year. Generally however, they are broadly in line with those expected for their age, with their personal and social skills usually being above expected levels. Children make good progress in their learning owing to the good quality provision. This commences with excellent induction processes which enable the children to settle quickly and securely into the routines of the well-organised classroom. The staff place a strong and appropriate emphasis on ensuring that the children’s welfare is at the heart of what they do. This results in children’s personal and social development being promoted particularly well.

The staff work closely as a team. They ensure that there is a good balance between those activities that they direct and those that the children decide for themselves. The classrooms provide an attractive and well-organised learning environment both inside and in the spacious outdoor learning areas. Children’s progress in reading and



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writing benefits from a well-conceived emphasis being placed on developing the children’s skills in linking sounds and letters, and this enables them to be confident when practising their writing. It also supports their speaking and listening skills well. Assessments are used effectively to track children’s learning and to inform teachers’ lesson planning.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>2</b>
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

An exceptionally high proportion of parents and carers completed the questionnaires. They were overwhelmingly supportive of the school, with almost all responses being positive in all areas. Parents and carers were particularly eloquent in their comments about how the school has moved forward since the new headteacher was appointed. In addition, many commented on the good ‘all-round’ education that the school provides for their children. There were no areas in which the proportion or nature of responses required further investigation by the inspection team.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashford 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 101 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 134 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	68	38	38	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	75	25	25	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	43	43	55	54	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	36	56	55	7	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	49	49	50	50	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	43	43	56	55	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	54	42	42	3	3	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)	53	52	41	41	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	48	48	44	44	7	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	45	52	51	2	2	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	57	56	38	38	4	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	67	66	32	32	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	57	56	41	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 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Ashford Hill Primary School, Thatcham, RG11 8BB**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We really enjoyed seeing you working hard in lessons and getting on so well together. I particularly enjoyed watching the celebration assembly that was led by the Year 6 pupils, and it was encouraging to see so many of you being rewarded for good work! The many pupils who were kind enough to speak to us showed how proud you are of your school. You are right to be, because yours is a good school. We found that you really enjoy school, behave well and you make good progress in your learning. You know how to stay safe and be healthy. Your headteacher runs your school well and she has good support from all the other staff. They understand how they could make it even better. Your teachers make sure that your topics are exciting and interesting. All the staff care for you well.

Even in a good school such as yours, there are always some things to do to make it better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to make even more of your lessons good or better. We have asked for you to be given more opportunities for carrying out practical mathematics investigations. We want those of you that are in Years 3 to 6 to be given extra ways in which you can assess your learning. Finally, we have asked that you are helped to be clear about what you need to do to improve your work and reach the next level.

We hope that you continue to enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler  
Lead inspector

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