

# The Ashbeach Primary School

## Inspection report

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|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 110685          |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Cambridgeshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 395357          |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 21–22 June 2012 |
| <b>Lead inspector</b>          | Joseph Peacock  |

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> | 147  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                               | Becky Stewart  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Shirley Stapleton  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b>  | 18 June 2008   |
| <b>School address</b>                      | Ashbeach Drove<br>Ramsey St Mary's<br>Huntingdon<br>PE26 2TG |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                    | 01733 844262   |
| <b>Fax number</b>                          | 01733 844262   |
| <b>Email address</b>                       | office@ashbeach.cambs.sch.uk                                 |

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|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>          | 4–11            |
| <b>Inspection date(s)</b> | 21–22 June 2012 |
| <b>Inspection number</b>  | 395357          |



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Joseph Peacock

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspector visited eight lessons observing five teachers. He held meetings with the headteacher, chair and vice-chair of the governing body and staff with leadership roles; he also spoke with pupils, parents and carers. The inspector observed the school's work and looked at assessment data and pupils' completed work. He read and evaluated documentation including improvement planning and policies relating to safeguarding and children's welfare. He took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) when planning the inspection. He scrutinised 54 inspection questionnaires returned by parents and carers, and those returned by staff and pupils.

## Information about the school

The school is smaller than the average sized primary school. Around 80 pupils travel to school each day by bus from rural Fenland communities. Most pupils are of White British heritage and the very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are all fluent in English. The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is average, although the proportion supported by School Action Plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. Pupils are from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds; the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. It has National Healthy School status and an Eco Silver Award. The school has extensive grounds and within its boundaries there is a 'common' with many additional learning facilities such as a pond, vegetable patch, woodland area and barn constructed from straw bales. Large sculptures and mosaics have been created by an artist-in-residence working with the pupils. A new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2010.

A privately run pre-school, which operates from its own accommodation on the school site, is inspected separately.

## Inspection judgements

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>          | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Achievement of pupils</b>          | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Quality of teaching</b>            | <b>4</b> |
| <b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b> | <b>3</b> |
| <b>Leadership and management</b>      | <b>4</b> |

## Key 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 special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- The overall effectiveness of the school is not satisfactory because too many pupils make inadequate progress in Key Stage 2. The school was judged outstanding in its previous inspection in 2008 but since then standards have declined and school leaders and the governing body have been ineffective in tackling weaknesses in teaching.
- Achievement is inadequate. Attainment has been well below average in Key Stage 2 since 2009 and is only just beginning to show improvement. Writing skills are weak for many pupils by the end of Key Stage 2. The neatness and presentation of pupils' work is poor throughout the school. Too many pupils make insufficient progress over time although progress is satisfactory in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is inadequate. Assessment information is not used effectively to match work to pupils' learning needs, especially for the more able. Pupils have too little time in some lessons to work and develop their skills, mainly because lesson introductions are far too long. Teachers' marking gives pupils guidance on how to improve but pupils generally are not encouraged to follow-up the teachers' help and advice. There is some good and outstanding teaching but this is not consistent to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress.
- Behaviour and safety are satisfactory. In lessons, behaviour is usually good and most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. A small minority of pupils cause concern during break times because of their boisterous behaviour. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. Performance management by senior staff has been ineffective in securing improvements. Procedures for

improving the quality of teaching, learning and the curriculum have recently been strengthened with support from a consultant and the expertise of local authority advisers.

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

- Raise attainment and ensure that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by:
  - improving pupils' skills in constructing sentences, punctuation and spelling and increasing opportunities for reading and writing at length, including when pupils use the outdoor learning facilities as a stimulus for writing
  - developing and consolidating basic calculation skills and their application to solving mathematical problems
  - ensuring that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are set challenging tasks that enable them to make faster progress
  - developing a whole school approach to teaching handwriting and correct letter formation in order to improve the neatness and legibility of pupils' work
  - ensuring that pupils respond to teachers' guidance when their work is marked in order to improve standards.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that none is inadequate and much is good or better by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils of all abilities can achieve, especially the more able
  - planning more opportunities for pupils to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum
  - ensuring pupils have enough time in lessons to complete challenging tasks which take account of their different learning needs.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels by:
  - developing the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and subject leaders so that they rigorously and effectively evaluate teaching, learning and the curriculum and play an active part in driving forward priorities for improvement
  - involving the governing body in evaluating school improvement and the impact of actions on raising achievement, ensuring that its members challenge and hold leaders to account.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

In the last two years of national tests which were undertaken by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment was significantly below average. School data show attainment is improving with an increasing number of pupils achieving expected and above average standards by Year 6. However, this is not enough to raise standards

sufficiently and they remain below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The rate of progress from pupils' starting points is inadequate. Pupils' progress is inconsistent in some subjects and year groups due to the variable quality of teaching. Inadequate teaching is holding pupils back and, as a result, they are not making the rapid progress needed to close the gap with their peers nationally. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make inadequate progress, although the number underachieving is reducing. This is due to the improved management of special educational needs and more specific targets, against which progress is evaluated regularly.

Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills that are broadly in line with those expected for their age, although social and emotional development for some is below the level expected. There is a systematic approach to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) and, as a result, children make steady progress in blending letters and building simple words. They make satisfactory progress overall and enter Year 1 with skills that are average for their age in all areas of learning. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and by the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the latest school data show that no pupils are yet attaining above average standards in writing.

In lessons and from evidence of a scrutiny of pupils' work in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2, pupils demonstrated weak skills in punctuation, spelling and handwriting. Insufficient opportunities to develop basic literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum contribute to pupils' slow progress. As a result, letter formation, handwriting and the development of spelling skills are a weakness for many.

A recent focus on improving mathematics is beginning to raise standards at Key Stages 1 and 2. However, basic calculation skills are insecure for many pupils in Years 3 to 6 and opportunities to consolidate or extend these skills through problem-solving are insufficient. For example, it was evident in a lesson observed that many pupils found the tasks of reading timetables and comparing digital and analogue clocks too easy. Recent external support to improve teaching is helping more pupils to make accelerated progress in both English and mathematics in upper Key Stage 2, but it is not enough to compensate for earlier gaps in their learning.

Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are happy with their children's progress but a few parents noted comments about the more able pupils not being challenged and the learning needs of the less able pupils not being met. Validated assessment data and the school's own recent assessment information show many pupils are underachieving in English and mathematics.

### **Quality of teaching**

Inadequate teaching over time has led to pupils making insufficient progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Teaching observed during the inspection varied from outstanding to inadequate. The result is that the gap between pupils' attainment and the challenging targets set by the school is closing but not

quickly enough. The inconsistent quality of teaching is leading to underachievement for many pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

Common weaknesses where teaching is not effectively promoting learning include introductions to the whole class where pupils sit for too long listening to the teacher, limiting their time to work independently. In these lessons, tasks that are often not challenging or linked closely to the different ability of pupils reflect teachers' low expectations of what pupils can do. Typically, work is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others. Teacher's planning in the Early Years Foundation Stage shows that outdoor learning activities are not always planned in the same detail as those indoors and the links between the two are sometimes not made clear. The teaching of reading is variable throughout the school. It is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and satisfactory in Years 1 and 2 but inadequate overall in Years 3 to 6.

There are examples of outstanding and good teaching on which the school can build, but this stronger teaching is not sufficiently widespread to enable pupils to make good progress and achieve well. Most teachers conscientiously mark pupils' work and some give clear guidance on how to improve. There is little evidence, though, of teachers ensuring that pupils take note of the guidance provided. The use of individual targets to help pupils to improve their work is well established but some teachers are not planning appropriately challenging work to ensure pupils make faster progress in achieving their targets.

Many pupils say that they like their teachers and that they make learning fun. Pupils work well together in groups and many of the creative activities outdoors on the 'common' are inspirational and exciting. Parents and carers are equally positive about teaching and how well basic skills are promoted. Nevertheless, inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching is too variable and inadequate teaching is having an adverse effect on pupils' achievement.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour varies in lessons and around the school. It is good in most lessons and there is usually a calm atmosphere for learning. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is evident from their attendance which is consistently above average. In lessons where teaching is weaker and the pace of learning is slow, a few pupils occasionally lose concentration and do not listen attentively.

A minority of parents and carers expressed concerns about behaviour around the school and in lessons and about bullying, although they are confident that their children are safe in school. Discussions with pupils during the inspection indicate that they feel safe, and they have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They show a good understanding of different types of bullying such as name-calling and prejudice-based bullying. Pupils are confident that staff will look after them and say that they are quick to act and stop play fights before they become serious. Pupils are positive about behaviour in lessons but almost half expressed concerns about the boisterous play of a very few pupils. Pupils' involvement in developing a set of values and aims through the school council is

ensuring that incidents of bullying and misbehaviour are rare. This is confirmed by school records and the fact that there has only been one fixed-term exclusion in the past two years.

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management at all levels, including that of the governing body, are inadequate because the school has not been effective in securing essential improvements in pupils' achievement over the last four years. The experienced headteacher shows ambition for the school to improve and many changes have been implemented in an effort to accelerate pupils' progress. However, these actions have had too little impact on raising standards at a fast enough rate and eliminating weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Consequently, pupils' progress and achievement overall is inadequate. External help from a consultant and local authority advisers is bringing much needed support and this is beginning to make a difference to the quality of education provided by the school.

Senior leaders are working with staff as a team and are focused on making improvements. However, most of the management structures are recently introduced and only just starting to have an impact. The school uses a sophisticated system for tracking pupils' attainment and this provides an accurate picture for different groups and forms the basis for setting ambitious new targets. The recently introduced pupil progress meetings are aimed at closing gaps in pupils' learning and holding teachers to account for pupils' progress. It is however too early to judge any significant impact of these new arrangements on pupils' attainment or teachers' performance management. Inconsistencies in planning pupils' work mean that equality of opportunity is not being adequately promoted for all groups of pupils. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching are not sufficiently robust to identify strengths and weaknesses in practice across the school or to eliminate weak teaching. Subject leaders have not had the opportunity until recently to contribute effectively to school improvement.

The curriculum is inadequate in meeting the needs of all pupils or in promoting their literacy and numeracy skills. By contrast, creativity is a strong feature, inspired by the truly exceptional outdoor facilities and the inspirational work of a local artist-in-residence. Pupils enjoy outdoor learning on the 'common' which provides a rich variety of learning opportunities. However, there is little evidence of these experiences having a marked impact on improving pupils' basic skills in English or mathematics. A good range of enrichment activities such as an 'imagineering' club, rock school and musical theatre are well attended and add to pupils' enjoyment of school. They learn to speak three languages and residential visits are arranged each year for all Key Stage 2 pupils. There is caring and close support for those pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, helping them to feel safe and to become more independent.

The school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, resulting in positive attitudes to learning and generally good relationships. Pupils have a good knowledge of other cultures and religions. Links are well established with Nicaragua following staff visits. The school's arrangements for



safeguarding pupils meet current government requirements.

## 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      | 54  | 42   | 2            | 2          |
| Primary schools      | 14  | 49   | 32           | 6          |
| Secondary schools    | 20  | 39   | 34           | 7          |
| Special schools      | 33  | 45   | 20           | 3          |
| Pupil referral units | 9   | 55   | 28           | 8          |
| All schools          | 16  | 47   | 31           | 6          |

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Achievement:               | the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.   |
| Attainment:                | the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.  |
| Attendance:                | the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.   |
| Behaviour:                 | how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.   |
| Capacity to improve:       | the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.                    |
| Floor standards:           | the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.  |
| Leadership and management: | the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:     | inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.  |
| 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. |
| Safety:                    | how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.             |

**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.**



25 June 2012

Dear Pupils

### **Inspection of The Ashbeach Primary School, Huntingdon, PE26 2TG**

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school and for completing the inspection questionnaire. It was good to talk to you and to explore all the facilities you have on the 'common' and in your school grounds. The straw bale barn was very impressive and I liked the mosaics in the 'sitooterie'.

I found that your school has some strengths, but it also needs to improve because many of you are not making as much progress as you should in reading, writing and mathematics. To help your school improve as quickly as possible, it will receive extra help called 'special measures'. This means that staff will have support and advice, and inspectors will visit regularly to check on how well the school is making progress.

Younger children settle quickly in the Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress. Most of you agree teachers make learning fun and you work hard in lessons. All of you enjoy school and this is clearly evident because your attendance is above average compared with other schools. I was impressed with how much you know about other religions and cultures and that you learn to speak three languages.

To improve your school, I have asked the headteacher, governing body and staff to:

- ensure that you make faster progress in learning and have more opportunities to practise literacy and numeracy skills
- make all your lessons as good as the best ones and check carefully that you are all given work which is challenging and interesting
- involve all staff in regular checks on your progress and how well teaching supports your learning, especially in English and mathematics
- make sure that the governing body knows what needs to be further improved.

All the adults in your school want it to improve quickly and I am sure you do too. You can all help by taking more notice of teachers' marking comments and doing your best to make your work much neater.

Yours sincerely

Joseph Peacock  
Lead inspector

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