

Ashton Church of England Primary School

Road Hill, Ashton, Northampton, NN7 2JH

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has made good progress since the last inspection and pupils achieve well because of good teaching and good leadership and management. Levels of attainment have improved.
- The staff work well together under the headteacher's leadership and provide a curriculum which gives pupils a wide range of experiences.
- Different events in the school calendar which link the school to the community, including the church, help develop pupils' confidence and social skills. Assemblies are thoughtfully presented and help pupils' spiritual, cultural and moral development.
- The quality of teaching is managed well. Governors, too, have a good idea of teaching quality through their visits.
- Pupils behave well and have a mature understanding of how to treat others. They have a good knowledge of personal safety.
- The pupils get along well together. The school is 'a happy family'. Pupils know each other very well.
- Staff take very good care of the pupils. Parents are pleased that their children attend the school and speak highly of it.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage need further development so that the experiences challenge the children's thinking more.
- Subject leaders are not systematic enough in planning and undertaking reviews of subjects for which they are responsible.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills in subjects other than English.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited 13 lessons or parts of lessons. Due to the headteacher's teaching commitments, it was not possible to undertake joint observations of lessons.
- The inspector heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- He examined the 12 responses on Parent View, the government's website for parents' views of schools, and also the school's most recent survey of parents' opinions.
- A discussion was held with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- A formal discussion was held with pupils.
- The inspector held formal discussions with the headteacher.
- Progress data were examined and other school documentation, including safeguarding information.
- A discussion was held with a member of the governing body.

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a very small primary school with two classes, much below average in size. One class caters for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 while the other class is for Key Stage 2 pupils.
- The school has four part-time teachers who share the teaching of the two classes. The headteacher also teaches for half the week. This arrangement enables the Key Stage 2 class to be split for two mornings weekly. Additionally the school has five teaching assistants.
- Children begin the Reception year in the September before their fifth birthday. Almost all children have previously attended some form of pre-school provision.
- The school currently supports a below-average proportion of its pupils at school action, and also at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs.
- There are no pupils from ethnic minority groups.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is extra government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, pupils in the care of the local authority and those from families with a parent in the armed forces, is much lower than the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils practise and use their writing skills more effectively in different subjects by reducing the use of worksheets.
- Improve the quality of activities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - giving more attention to the national guidance for children's education for the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - thinking more deeply about the potential for learning in different activities
 - guiding the teaching assistant who is assigned to the Reception children so that she is clear about the learning that is intended to come from the different activities
 - visiting other schools which are renowned for their good Early Years Foundation Stage teaching, including small schools, and bringing back ideas to use.
- Ensuring that staff manage their many subject responsibilities in a planned way and so keep the quality of teaching and learning in different subjects under review.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Attainment on entry varies from year to year because of the very small numbers in each year group. The attainment of any one pupil can have a very considerable effect on results. The overall pattern indicates that attainment is broadly in line with expectations when the children enter.
- Pupils achieve well in the school as a whole. Results have been improving and particularly in the past two years. The progress of pupils currently in the school is good. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading. Regular reading in school, special group reading sessions, a good quality of books, which attract the children's interest, and the support of parents all contribute to this positive picture.
- Progress in mathematics and writing is also good, although not as rapid as in reading. Overuse of worksheets prevents pupils from writing sufficiently on their own in different subjects and working out their own thoughts.
- Staff give good support to disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs so that they make similar rates of progress to other pupils. Special work for individuals under guidance helps their understanding. Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding progress well and benefit from the funding and make similar rates of progress to others.
- Reception children's progress is a little slower. Attainment is usually around the national average but it varies from year to year depending on the number of children who find learning more difficult. Some activities for Reception children are not as challenging as they could be to develop children's learning.
- Pupils make good progress in their understanding of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) including Reception children. Year 1 pupils exceeded the national percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in the 2012 phonics screening test. More-able pupils do well in the school. In 2012, the proportion of pupils in both key stages who reached the higher levels exceeded national averages.
- Pupils develop good skills in speaking and listening. Describing the building of two electric circuits in science, one pupil likened the second circuit to an 'en-suite' to the main circuit. Pupils have good skills in information, communication and technology. Key Stage 1 pupils showed good skills by using modern computer tablets to photograph cardboard images of the characters in the Nativity and then put the events in order.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff provide an attractive school environment and maintain good relationships with the pupils and so the pupils are keen to learn. Staff manage pupils well.
- Teachers work hard to plan for different abilities and ages in the same class and activities are usually well matched to pupils' needs. Splitting the Key Stage 2 class into two halves for two mornings each week helps to ensure that the pupils receive appropriate work.

- Teachers make good use of practical resources to help pupils understand their work. In a Year 3/4 mathematics lesson, individually the children chose four number cards and had to form these into a four digit number. In groups they then arranged these numbers from the highest to the lowest which helped them to understand the value of each digit.
- The teaching of reading and phonics is good and supports pupils' good progress. The careful records kept of pupils' progress in reading ensure that the texts are well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Marking is good. It is up to date. Teachers' written comments on pupils' work helpfully blend praise for what the pupils do well with aspects that can be improved, although handwriting, which can be untidy, does not receive enough rigorous attention.
- Staff provide interesting activities for the pupils to do in lessons. Good use is made of investigation in mathematics which promotes the pupils' thinking. Teaching assistants are used well in the activities. They work well with the pupils but occasionally tell the pupils too much rather than drawing out their responses through questioning. The teaching support in the Reception class needs guidance from teachers in the learning that they intend children to gain from activities.
- Teachers research their lessons well and show good knowledge of the subject. They use their expertise effectively in their part-time roles by concentrating on particular aspects of work. This ensures that pupils' learning is continuous. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what the lesson is going to be about and set out points which will help the pupils to be successful.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils enjoy school and attendance is above the national average. The pupils feel safe and like the small size of the school 'because we know everybody'. They feel that they have opportunities which they would not otherwise get in a larger school, such as being involved in different sporting tournaments. The school size, they say, also enables them 'not to get scared to ask because children are really close to you.'
- Records of pupils' behaviour indicate that it is typically good. They behave well in lessons, around the school and when at play. They show that they are aware of different forms of bullying but report that there is no bullying in school. Pupils enjoy the clubs and are keen to be involved in events that the school organises. They willingly join in assemblies which contribute well to their spiritual development and thought for others.
- The pupils support a range of charities and pay for a student's education in Africa. The school council is active in discussing school matters. It has planned the menu for the Christmas party and healthily included fruit salad. The pupils have made items for the school's Christmas market at which they will sell the products.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example, being wary of strangers and thinking about road safety. They are aware that some drugs can be useful and ease discomfort but that others are very harmful. They know about cyber bullying and appreciate that it is best not to give information to people. They understand that some sites on the internet can be dangerous and they should not access them. They advise against watching things that are 'over your age'.

The leadership and management are good

- The staff team works well together and has the interests of the school and its children at heart. The school development plan is well written and has a focus on even further improvements.
 - Safeguarding is good. Child protection matters are well considered. Policies which concern pupils' health and safety are precise and helpful. The school keeps checks on a wide range of people who visit the school.
 - The local authority can no longer provide the support to its schools it once did due to a reduction in staffing. However, it has worked successfully with the governing body, which has improved significantly as a result.
 - The curriculum is well planned, although the experiences for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are not always deep enough and do not refer sufficiently to national guidance. Other pupils generally do not practise their writing skills in different subjects sufficiently. A rota of themes and content help ensure that pupils do not repeat work.
 - Sufficient extra opportunities are provided for the pupils, given the size of the school. The residential visit in which pupils take part contributes well to the pupils' social development. Visits to places of interest, including to museums in connection with their studies, help to strengthen learning and also develop their spiritual and cultural development effectively.
 - Teachers take on a large range of subject responsibilities because of the small size of the school but they do not systematically oversee progress and provision in a planned way so that each subject can be reviewed periodically. Nevertheless, the staff track pupils' progress carefully.
 - Appraisal arrangements to review the progress of individual teachers are in place. A suitable number of targets are set for each teacher but they are not always written in terms that can measure success. There is a clear link between pay and performance.
 - Although the school receives very little money for pupil premium, it is wisely spent on one to one tuition and extra hours for teaching assistants. The effect is seen in the improvements to the pupils' attainment. The gap between the attainment of pupils for whom this money is intended and that of the others is narrowing.
 - The school works well with other local schools, and the grouping together of teachers who teach different year groups helps the spread of good ideas. However, not enough is learned from other schools about different approaches to teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school also works well with the local secondary school which has a sports specialism. This partnership ensures that pupils receive lots of opportunities to take part in different sporting tournaments.
 - The school has good links with its parents and they think highly of the school. Parents state that they are particularly grateful to the school for the care given to the pupils including those who experience emotional difficulties.
 - **The governance of the school:**
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- Membership within the governing body contains a good range of expertise including some which enables school data to be understood. Governors undertake training for their roles and understand the appraisal arrangements for staff. Governors are keen to see the school keep up the improvements. They visit and undertake a range of activities to keep abreast of teaching quality, including looking at pupils' books and visiting lessons, and report on these visits. The governing body has a good structure of committees. The curriculum committee is particularly strong. Finance is well managed. Governors know that the small amount of money for pupils entitled to the premium funding is well spent on those for whom it is intended and that it is paying dividends for these particular pupils. Governors question and challenge the school and look particularly at the progress of individuals.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121957
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	402070

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	35
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Russell Hardman
Headteacher	Sue Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2009
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Fax number	01604 863189
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