

Ashcombe Primary School

Earlham Grove, Weston-super-Mare, BS23 3JW

Inspection dates 15–16 January 2013

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.

- Pupils achieve well because they are all 'nurtured, valued and motivated' – just as the school logo says!
- Teaching is typically good and has improved since the last inspection.
- Pupils are happy and feel safe and secure. They behave well in class and around the school. Pupils take an interest in their learning because lessons are made interesting and fun.
- The talented team in the Early Years Foundation Stage makes sure that every child gets an excellent start to their education.
- By helping individual staff to improve the weaker aspects of their teaching skills, the headteacher has successfully improved pupils' learning. Individual staff development plans are closely linked to annual performance reviews and pay awards.
- The forward-thinking headteacher makes the very best use of the strengths of his senior leadership team. He has skilfully developed other experienced teachers to capably lead on key areas of responsibility.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are fully involved in its life and are not afraid to ask important questions.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils who are capable of doing much harder work are not always given enough opportunities to do so by their teachers.
- Subject leaders and class teachers are yet to use the information gained from checks on pupils' progress to help pupils make faster progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or part sessions and 15 of these were seen jointly with five different members of the leadership team. Inspectors observed a school assembly and briefly visited the breakfast club and the after-school provision.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and subject coordinators, four governors, including the Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a local authority representative.
- Pupils' views were sought throughout the inspection, during lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Inspectors met with different groups of pupils, including members of the school council.
- Staff views were noted and inspectors had several conversations with individual teachers.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school's own information on pupils' progress, policies, planning and monitoring records.
- Inspectors paid close attention to school information on attendance, behaviour and all aspects of safeguarding.
- The views of parents were taken into account through the 93 responses to the on-line Parent View questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Bill James	Additional Inspector
Linda Rowley	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- In Years 1 to 6 there are two classes per year group with an intake of 60 per year. The school is currently expanding and there are now three Reception classes which provide places for 90 children. Reception children are taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage, based in the adjacent children's centre which is run by the local authority.
- Although the proportions of pupils who are from minority ethnic groups and those who use English as an additional language remains well below average, they are increasing year on year.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support internally from the school for moderate learning difficulties, speech and language delay, and emotional and behavioural needs is above average. (These pupils are supported through school action.)
- The proportion of pupils receiving specialist support from outside agencies to help them with physical, moderate learning, emotional and behavioural needs is below average. (These pupils are supported by school action plus or a statement of special educational needs.)
- The proportion of pupils eligible for additional government funding, which is known as pupil premium and supports those pupils who are risk of failing to do as well as other pupils, are well above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Breakfast club and after-school provision are managed by the school.
- The school uses its own facilities to teach pupils and does not use any alternative provision.
- A new school building is currently under construction and is due to be completed ready for September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching and achievement outstanding by:
 - ensuring that subject leaders and class teachers take greater responsibility for checking pupils' progress data and using it to inform their planning
 - making sure that all teachers set work that extends the more-able and encourages them to think for themselves and make faster progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In the Year 6 national tests for 2012, pupils attained average results and the progress made from their individual starting points was good. There has been an improving trend in English over the past four years and current Year 6 standards indicate that this will be maintained. Although the upward trend in mathematics was reversed in 2011 when there was a slight dip in the performance of girls, an improvement in 2012 and an indication from current standards in Year 6 show that the upward trend is back on track.
- Most children start school with skills that are generally below the expected level for their age. Most noticeable is their under-developed speech and reluctance to use different words. This affects all other areas of learning. The highly experienced Early Years Foundation Stage team enables the children to make good progress in their first year in school. Individuals are carefully observed and the information gathered is used to plan interesting activities which build up children's speaking, reading, writing, counting, physical and creative skills.
- All pupils make good progress as they move through the school. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of writing since the last inspection. The concerns also raised about girls' achievement in mathematics have been taken on board by the school and the resulting improvements are reflected well in the 2012 test results.
- Results from the Year 1 phonic (linking letters with the sounds they make) screening check in 2012 were slightly disappointing. However, the school has used the information it gained from the check, together with the findings of an external review, to improve aspects of the way in which they teach reading skills. Younger children are developing accuracy in sounding out letters and confidently work out words they do not know. The fluency with which older pupils read, together with their impressive choice and range of books read, reflects well the strong emphasis the school places on developing literacy skills.
- Pupil progress is regularly checked and maintained centrally. The findings are used well by the headteacher to hold teachers to account for their performance and to identify those pupils who need extra help. However, subject leaders and class teachers are not familiar enough with the data to make sure they are used to target the more able who do not always make as much progress as they could because the work they are given does not extend their independent thinking.
- Detailed checks on pupils who receive additional government funding and those who have a specific learning need ensure that these individuals are progressing at the same level as their peers. Although previously the difference between their average point scores in tests was lower than other pupils, the gap has narrowed considerably during this academic year and now matches their classmates. This is because this additional funding is being used well to support small groups and individuals. It is also being used well to finance trips out of school to enrich learning and provide extra opportunities, such as learning to play a musical instrument.

The quality of teaching is good

- In the majority of lessons observed, and in the work seen, teaching is consistently good and has improved over time.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding because teachers rely too heavily on the headteacher to provide data from pupil progress checks. Although individuals who find learning difficult are supported well by learning support assistants, the more-able pupils are not always set work which challenges them and extends their thinking.
- Teaching staff establish positive relationships with the pupils. Teachers in the same year group plan together an interesting and meaningful range of topics which motivates both boys and girls. This is evident in the work produced by Year 3 based around a topic on the Romans which has been closely linked to the building of the new school.

- In the best lessons there is a purposeful pace, a good balance between teacher and pupil talk, and learning support assistants are used creatively to support individual needs. This was evident in a literacy lesson in a Year 3 class when the learning support assistant worked on her own with a more-able group at the start of the lesson and then moved seamlessly to help pupils who needed guidance when the lesson got underway.
- Effective teaching was also seen when the pupils were asked questions which made them think for themselves and draw on previous knowledge. In a Year 6 lesson pupils were asked to remember what they had learnt about India in Year 2. The teacher used focused questions to check pupils' understanding and then extended their learning by asking pupils to explain and justify their thinking.
- The marking of pupils' work has improved recently. By adopting a consistent approach to identifying why pupils' work is good and where pupils need to improve, pupils understand what the next step in their learning should be.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage team uses its exceptional knowledge and understanding of how young children learn to make sure that activities are meaningful but fun. One group was observed going on a 'Bear Hunt'. Dressed appropriately, with a well-equipped rucksack, these youngsters trudged through 'squidgy mud', 'icy puddles' and 'long, wet grass' in search of a lost toy. This activity not only provided good opportunities for experiencing new words and sensations, it also helped them develop their physical skills as they tried to steer their way through the mud!
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have specific learning or behavioural difficulties are given high quality help from both teachers and learning support assistants. This approach is also used well to help those pupils who use English as an additional language to develop their knowledge and skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are typically polite and well behaved in class, around school, and in the breakfast and after-school provision. They cooperate well with staff and work sensibly with each other in pairs and groups. This was shown in a Year 6 science lesson where pupils of different abilities were grouped together and helped each other to solve the problems presented to them by the teacher.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour consistently well across the school. Pupils want to learn and listen carefully to their teachers. Although at times their attention wanders when the work is too easy or lacks challenge, they remain well behaved and do not disrupt the lesson.
- Pupils take on roles of responsibility, such as buddies for the younger children, and Year 6 pupils are very clear that they must set an example as the oldest pupils. The school council has been active in making improvements. For example, the members successfully bid for the finance required to buy a double-decker bus to provide a quiet zone in the playground and have raised money for skate-boarding ramps and scooters. The work of the Eco council with a local water company is impressive, as is the way in which the team has designed safety posters and has created its own school rules.
- Pupils are aware of the different forms of bullying and know how to protect themselves or get help. They say that there is very little bullying and this is confirmed by school log books and the parental questionnaire. Pupils report that they feel safe and are confident that staff deal promptly with any of their worries or concerns.
- The school supports children who have behavioural and emotional difficulties very well, particularly through the effective work of the learning mentors. This has resulted in a decline in the exclusion rate. Equality of opportunity is promoted well and discrimination is not tolerated.
- Attendance has been above average for the past three years, but the recent dip to broadly average is a result of a higher proportion of Reception children taking holiday during term time. Pupils are punctual and persistent absenteeism has declined.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has been successful in driving forward a clear plan of improvements for the school. He has skilfully used the strengths within his senior leadership team to develop specific aspects that required improvement.
- The deputy headteacher has ensured that all pupils receive an exciting range of experiences which makes an effective contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This means that research into the Second World War includes experiencing what it was like to be an evacuee and learning lots of songs from the era.
- The assistant headteacher promotes the involvement of parents in the life of the school and plays a crucial role in maintaining the high quality care and support given to both individual pupils and their family members.
- Leadership and management are not yet outstanding because although subject leaders are fully involved in checking teaching, they do not take full responsibility for the data gathered from pupil progress checks.
- School development plans are sharply focused and all aspects of work are kept under review. Good staff training and opportunities to observe each other have strengthened teaching across the school. This demonstrates well the school's ambition to improve further.
- Improvements in teaching reflect the tighter systems introduced to check the performance of each teacher. By working closely with individual teachers, the headteacher supports and guides them to develop those aspects of their teaching which need improving. He holds each teacher to account for individual pupil progress and this links directly to school priorities and staff salaries.
- Safeguarding meets current government requirements and is effective. The school carries out the necessary checks on staff to ensure their suitability to work with children. All staff have undergone training at the required levels.
- Given that the school has a secure understanding of its strengths and areas requiring development, the local authority provides a measured level of support. A recent review carried out by the local authority confirmed improvements in the teaching and progress made by pupils in mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors work in close partnership with the school. Since the last inspection they have sharpened their focus on driving up pupil achievement and ensuring that teaching is of a high standard. Governors gain first-hand evidence of the day-to-day life in school because they make links with classes and subject areas. At the regular Governor Involvement Leadership Team, otherwise known as GILT, the impact of teaching and leadership and management on pupil achievement is evaluated carefully. The governors have a good working knowledge of the school's strengths and areas that still need to be developed. They check that targets set to improve the performance of staff are reviewed carefully and that teachers' pay is linked to how well pupils are doing. They make sure that financial resources are efficiently managed and have a good understanding of the way that additional government funding is spent on providing extra support and activities for pupils to help them in their learning. Governors demonstrate their strategic direction for the school by proactively seeking a new building for the school and securing its place within the local community. They eagerly attend governor training events to ensure that they are up to date with best practice.

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	109096
Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	401032

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pauline Wood
Headteacher	Peter Turner
Date of previous school inspection	18-19 January 2010
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