

Ashill Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Oaks, Ashill, Thetford, IP25 7AP

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils' achievement requires improvement. The progress they make varies too much from year to year and this has held back their attainment, particularly at the end of Key Stage 1 and in writing.
- Teaching requires improvement. There is not enough good or outstanding teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress. In some lessons the tasks set are not adapted enough for pupils at different ability levels.
- The progress made by pupils who have fallen behind in their work, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also varies too much. Some of the actions taken to help them catch up have not been effective enough.
- Leadership and management require improvement. Although leaders visit lessons regularly to check the quality of teaching, they do not check carefully enough how well writing is taught or the effectiveness of help and guidance for pupils who receive extra support.

The school has the following strengths

- Good improvements have been made since the last inspection in mathematics and in the way Reception children are educated.
- Good teaching at the end of Key Stage 2 helps older pupils to make good progress and catch up lost ground, including in writing, in preparation for secondary school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they feel safe and secure at school. Pupils say they enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- Senior leaders and the governors demonstrate the drive and ambition to bring about further improvements. Governors now contribute much more by asking the school's leaders searching questions about its performance.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in each class and visited 10 lessons. Six observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector had meetings with staff, groups of pupils and three governors, including the Chair of Governors. He also had a telephone discussion about the school with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at a range of evidence including: the school's self-evaluation and development plans; attainment and progress data; teachers' planning; performance monitoring reports; and the school's safeguarding arrangements. He also observed pupils' behaviour and discussed this with pupils, looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils read from Years 1 and 2.
- The inspector took into account the 15 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the information on the views of parents provided by the school. He also met some parents informally at the end of the first day of the inspection.

Inspection team

Rob McKeown, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in one single-age and three mixed-age classes.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- A few pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and supported at school action is a little below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a little above average.
- The school's 2012 national test results cannot be compared against the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics, because there were not enough pupils to make such comparisons meaningful.
- Since the last inspection, the school has experienced an unusually high turnover of teaching staff and periods of temporary teaching cover for two of its four classes.
- The school has been awarded the Eco-school Silver Flag.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better in all classes by:
 - matching the learning tasks planned for all pupils closely to their ability levels
 - checking on learning during lessons to ensure it is successful, and adjusting teaching to help pupils overcome any misunderstandings
 - applying the school's marking policy consistently, including making time for pupils to respond to the points made for improvement
 - sharpening the support provided by other adults during lessons when the teacher is teaching the whole class.
- Raise standards and improve achievement in writing by:
 - giving all pupils daily, short writing tasks to help them improve their skills
 - focusing leaders' lesson observations on how well writing is taught.
- Thoroughly and regularly check that teaching and the support provided for pupils with special educational needs and those that need to catch up are raising their achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because there is too much variability in the standards pupils' reach. Pupils leave the school with broadly average attainment, although their results show they make better progress in mathematics than in English. Since the last inspection, standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved in mathematics but have been below where they should be in reading and writing. Past weaknesses in the quality of teaching have contributed to this.
- The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs shows similar variability. Leaders track all pupils' attainment and progress and meet with teachers to identify when the progress of individual pupils is too slow. The additional teaching and support provided for these pupils results in some making better progress, but for others it has not been successful enough.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding to provide additional teaching and involve pupils in a wider range of school activities. The 2012 test results show that the impact on the attainment and progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was mixed and not successful for all pupils.
- The school's tracking data shows that most pupils are making better progress in reading and mathematics than in writing. Leaders have identified the need to improve writing as a key priority. The writing seen in pupils' books in Year 6 indicates good improvement from the start of the year, but several pupils have not yet caught up. These pupils are benefiting from daily writing tasks, which focus on improving sentence writing, vocabulary and handwriting skills.
- Most Year 6 pupils reach an appropriate standard in reading, and often read well. The teaching of early reading skills, including the sounds letters make (phonics), is given high priority in the Reception and Year 1 and 2 classes. This is helping to improve attainment in reading, which has been too low in the past. The results of last year's phonic screening check were a little below the national standard.
- Children come into the school with the skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age, although their early writing and communication skills are relatively weak. The Reception teachers' assessment records show that most children make good progress in all the areas of learning, although their writing remains a weaker aspect. The staff have responded by providing more early writing opportunities for children this year.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection but there is still not enough good teaching to ensure all pupils make good progress. The strongest teaching is in Years 5 and 6, although good teaching was observed in Reception and the work seen in pupils' books in Years 3 and 4 suggests good teaching this year. No inadequate or outstanding teaching was seen.
- Where teaching is less than good, it is usually because the tasks set are not exactly right for all pupils. This is particularly evident for some lower ability pupils, who are asked to do things that are too difficult. Sometimes teachers do not check enough how well pupils are doing when they are working on their own, so they can spot mistakes, tackle misunderstandings and adjust their teaching accordingly.

- All teachers focus on developing pupils' literacy and mathematical skills. For example, Reception children were seen learning letter sounds, Year 6 pupils writing sentence openers, and Year 3 and 4 pupils practising multiplication tables. In several lessons the teachers used well-prepared resources to support learning and the interactive whiteboard to help interest pupils and emphasise their teaching points.
- Other adults working in classrooms usually give helpful support and guidance to groups or individual pupils. However, sometimes they are not as effective when the teacher is teaching the whole class.
- In good lessons, teachers make clear what pupils are going to learn and link this to previous learning. They also discuss with pupils the steps they will need to take to succeed, and expect pupils to discuss and reflect on these during the lesson. In the best lessons, tasks are matched well to the different levels of ability and all pupils are suitably challenged. The lessons seen in Years 5 and 6 reflected teachers' high expectations for work and behaviour, and all pupils were actively involved in learning.
- In most lessons, teachers assess pupils' knowledge and understanding by asking them appropriate questions. Teachers in the Reception class keep very detailed records of children's learning successes and share them regularly with parents. Most marking in pupils' books follows the system agreed by staff and identifies improvements that pupils can make. However, pupils' books show that they do not always respond to the advice they are given.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well. Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning, concentrate well in lessons and do their best. Just occasionally, these high standards drop when they do not fully understand what they are expected to do.
- The Year 6 pupils spoken to during the inspection were polite, friendly and pleased to talk about their enjoyment of school. They understand how well they are doing, and can explain the targets they have to help them improve their writing and mathematics.
- Pupils generally play well together, cooperate in lessons, and move around the school in an orderly way. The school's behaviour policy reflects its high expectations and is clear about how behaviour should be managed. Staff apply this effectively, although Year 6 pupils say that occasionally pupils' behaviour at lunchtime is not as well managed. Each class has a behaviour log in which any lapses in behaviour are noted. There is also a more formal school log in which the very few entries of more serious incidents, including any bullying, are recorded.
- All parents who completed questionnaires and the latest school survey believe their children are safe in school. Pupils say they feel safe and secure. Older pupils are able to explain what to do about the different types of bullying they may encounter, including those that involve prejudice. Pupils learn about personal safety in lessons, including road safety, and are taught how to use the internet safely.
- Assemblies and the themes that teachers follow in personal, social and health education contribute to pupils' good all-round personal development. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and the positive role models provided by staff teaching the Reception class help children to develop good early communication, personal and social skills. Older pupils show good care for younger pupils when playing outside.

- Attendance is above average. The school keeps a close check on attendance, and pupils enjoy receiving the gold, silver and bronze awards given for higher levels of attendance.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher leads the staff well, despite having had to manage considerable disruption in staffing at all levels since the last inspection. However, dealing with these issues has slowed the pace of improvement and affected pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 to 4.
 - Leaders have secured some good improvements since the last inspection. The learning activities for the Reception children are now much better suited to their age and abilities, and improved teaching of mathematics has resulted in better progress and results in Key Stages 1 and 2.
 - The school development plan sets out clearly the right improvement priorities, based on an accurate evaluation of what is going well in the school and what could be better, for example pupils' writing. Decisions are also taken in response to the checks made on pupils' attainment, for example, providing additional teaching for Year 5 pupils this term to accelerate their progress.
 - The headteacher and key subject leaders check the quality of teaching and teachers' planning, and look at pupils' books to see how much progress they are making and if marking is meeting the school's expectations. Currently their monitoring does not focus sufficiently on the teaching of writing, or why the teaching of pupils with special educational needs is not always effective.
 - Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the way subjects are taught. Pupils follow termly topics and have special theme weeks and opportunities to visit places of interest. Displays of pupils' work around the school illustrate how learning in other subjects has helped develop pupils' writing, for example Year 5 and 6 persuasive writing about Athens and Sparta.
 - The local authority has supported the school's improvement by linking it with a local leader of education in a neighbouring primary school. This has strengthened the school's work on judging the quality of teaching and improved the effectiveness of governance.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governance has improved since the last inspection and is effective. The governing body has continued to ensure that safeguarding procedures meet national requirements, that all pupils have a chance to succeed and that there is no discrimination. Governors also continue to give the headteacher and staff good support and collect the views of parents in an annual survey. The role governors play in challenging for improvement is sharper, because they visit the school regularly to check how well it is doing and report their findings at governing body meetings. Governors regularly receive reports from the headteacher on pupils' achievement, including the impact of pupil premium funding, and on the quality of teaching. They use this information to make sure that staff pay rises are appropriate. Governors take a fair but thorough approach when assessing the performance of the headteacher.

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	121026
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	401991

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	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Robbie Fulcher
Headteacher	Kelly Scott
Date of previous school inspection	24 September 2009
Telephone number	01760 440403
Fax number	01760 440403
Email address	head@ashill.norfolk.sch.uk

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