

Ash Hill Primary School

Herbert Road, High Wycombe, HP13 7HT

Inspection dates 8–9 October 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| 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 make good progress overall from their starting points to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Provision and progress in the each key stage is good overall.
- Teaching has been systematically improved over the last three years and is now good. Teachers ask probing questions to check pupils' understanding and to make them think more deeply.
- Lessons are well planned and provide stimulating learning opportunities, which add to pupils' enjoyment and engagement.
- Pupils like going to school and feel safe. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are good.
- Parents and carers speak highly of the school and value the school's good communication and the additional support their children receive.
- Leaders at all levels are having a good impact and the school is improving rapidly. Since the last inspection, plans for improvement have been well targeted in the right areas.
- The governing body provides good support and challenge. Governors' monitoring has checked the impact of the school's actions effectively, ensuring governors are knowledgeable and well informed.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- Pupils' achievement in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1 and for younger more able pupils, is not yet good.
- Not enough of the teaching is outstanding. Although teachers have improved the quality of pupils' writing, they have not yet focused sufficiently, particularly through marking, on the content and style to ensure that they are consistently good.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 18 lessons. Some were joint observations with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, senior managers and subject leaders, representatives from the governing body, Bucks Learning Trust and the National Support School currently working with the school.
- Information from the school’s website and 14 responses from the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken to account in planning and conducting the inspection, together with a number of parents and carers, whose views were sought during the inspection. Questionnaires from 22 staff were also evaluated.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of documents. In particular they heard pupils read, evaluated pupils’ books, teachers’ planning, safeguarding information, the school’s systems for improving teaching and learning, and records from governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Angela Kirk, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Cliff Mainey

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ash Hill is an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is high. This is additional funding to support particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals and those in local authority care.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is high. Just over half of pupils are White British and about a quarter of Pakistani heritage. Other pupils come from a wide range of different minority ethnic backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school's nursery was opened in September 2012, with the governing body taking over an already established pre-school in the children's centre.
- There is a breakfast club for pupils, which is managed by the governing body.
- There is a children's centre on the school site, which is subject to a separate inspection. The school is being supported by a national leader of education (NLE) from Chepping View Primary Academy in High Wycombe.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing by further accelerating progress in Key Stage 1 by:
 - building on the good work in lessons that promotes talking to help pupils to clarify their ideas before writing
 - focusing on the criteria for success in the content and style of pupils' writing as well as punctuation and grammar.
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by:
 - increasing the challenges for the more able pupils, especially in writing
 - ensuring that pupils respond to teachers' marking of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- From low starting points, pupils are now making good progress to achieve broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Progress in reading, writing and mathematics has accelerated at a similar rate.
- Pupils are still not reaching close to average standards early enough in writing. At the time of the last inspection, attainment in writing was very low. In the last two years, too few pupils have attained average levels and no pupils have attained the level expected for higher-attaining pupils in writing at the end of Year 2.
- In lessons, pupils readily discuss their ideas with each other. All younger pupils rehearse by repeatedly saying their sentences before they write them, but there are too few opportunities for them to develop their ideas verbally before writing for longer periods so too few pupils reach average and higher levels.
- Pupils are given clear criteria for what is expected of them in their work. Sometimes in writing, these focus well on grammar and punctuation, but less well on content and style. Consequently some pupils do not always realise the value of good content in their writing.
- In Years 3 to 6, writing has accelerated faster than in Years 1 and 2, enabling most pupils to catch up because of the consistently good teaching.
- Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good although most children start in Year 1 with attainment that is still below average. A number of improvements in teaching, behaviour and leadership and management have been made in the Early Years Foundation Stage in response to issues identified at the last inspection, so progress has improved rapidly.
- The development of early reading skills is effective. Nursery and reception children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefit from a systematic grounding in the linking of sounds and letters (phonics). For older pupils, any gaps in their phonics knowledge are addressed through additional teaching, either one to one or in small groups. Older pupils in particular, show a real love of reading and willingly discuss their choice of books and favourite authors.
- The provisional national assessments in 2013 indicate that pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 increased significantly from previous years building on the trend already established. Two thirds of pupils made better than expected progress in writing and mathematics in 2013. A pattern of accelerated progress and close to average attainment is now evident across Years 3 to 6. This is because teaching has improved and the school has carefully targeted all individual pupils who require any additional support.
- The school has nearly eliminated any gaps in attainment across the school for those pupils eligible for the pupil premium in both English and mathematics. Many have made better progress than their peers because the school has ensured that additional money has been used to target additional support for each pupil according to their individual needs.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language receive effective support. Most make similar progress to that of their peers from differing starting points, although occasionally due to significant needs, appropriate, much smaller, effective, stepped targets are set for a few pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching of literacy and mathematics has been systematically improved, due to increased training in these areas, and is typically good. Teachers make their explanations of new learning clear and demonstrate good subject knowledge. They give pupils good opportunities not only to practise their basic skills, but also to apply these new skills by using them in other subjects.
- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage enables children to make good progress. Staff ensure that learning is fun and engaging, for example children really enjoyed learning to count objects from three to 10. They had to find bags of objects hidden in the outdoor area and were guided to line up the objects and to count them carefully, placing their finger on each

object in turn.

- Relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils are good. The quality of teaching and the good behaviour management skills of the teachers make a considerable contribution to the development of pupils' social skills.
- Individual targets are used successfully to help pupils to improve in English and mathematics. Pupils know what these are and in Years 5 and 6, pupils value their one-to-one sessions with senior leaders in the school, which help them to understand exactly how to be successful and to discuss their progress towards these targets.
- Accurate assessment leads adults to be able to plan appropriately for the next steps in pupils' learning. Lessons are interesting and they engage pupils well. Tasks are usually well matched to pupils' abilities, but occasionally, teachers do not have high enough expectations of the more able, especially in their writing. Where tasks are not well matched accurately enough, some pupils do not make progress as rapidly as they could.
- In their marking most teachers identify clearly where learning has been successful and where it could be improved. They do not always write these improvements in ways that pupils are able to understand and respond to.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good inside and outside the classroom and in breakfast club. Pupils are polite, well mannered and courteous to each other and to adults. They welcome visitors and are very proud of their school.
- Parents, carers, staff and pupils are united in their agreement that behaviour has improved considerably since the last inspection. The school has increased the robustness of its behaviour management systems and started some new initiatives, such as a breakfast club, to promote a positive and punctual start of the day for some pupils.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and show an understanding of different forms of bullying including safe use of the internet and how to keep themselves safe from strangers. Pupils say that there is no racism or bullying and that if there are any arguments, then the school uses 'talk time' to help them to resolve their problems. Pupils are confident in the success of this method.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural education is strong. Assemblies are used successfully to develop pupils' knowledge and awareness of moral issues and cultural and religious similarities and differences.
- Parents and carers spoken to, and those who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View, feel that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection and is average. The school has been rigorous in promoting the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Weekly trophies, postcards and certificates are all offered as incentives and these, together with clear systems for communicating attendance concerns to parents and carers using a traffic light approach, are having a good impact.

The leadership and management are good

- Leadership across the school, driven by the highly effective headteacher, is good. Leaders and managers have established a positive ethos, where pupils are keen to learn, staff feel valued and parents and carers are confident that the school is well led and managed.
- The school's evaluations of how well it is doing are accurate, so actions to improve have been successful in improving teaching, behaviour and leadership and management. Progress has accelerated rapidly over the past last few years. The school has appropriately targeted improving attainment in writing in Key Stage 1 and although it is too soon to see the full effect of this there are positive signs of improvement.
- The tracking of pupils' progress is very well developed and all groups of pupils, as well as individuals, are monitored carefully. The school holds progress meetings each half term, where class teachers supported by senior leaders evaluate how well pupils are doing. They use this

information to make carefully constructed plans, which identify exactly how and for whom extra help is to be targeted. The catch-up and extension work planned for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, those for whom English is an additional language and those supported by the pupil premium ensure they achieve in line with other pupils in school.

- The curriculum has been well developed to meet the needs and interests of the pupils. Topics are carefully planned so that pupils cover the full range of subjects, and themes are chosen which maximise opportunities for visits to places of interest or for visitors to the school. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects, supporting pupils' improved progress. Plans for the new funding and how it will be evaluated to support primary school sports have been put into place and early indications show an increased proportion of pupils are participating in activities out of school hours.
- The local authority and an NLE have supported the school well. This has particularly helped to ensure improvements to teaching and provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, to teaching across the school and to systems to improve leadership and management including governance.
- Safeguarding is secure in and around the school and in the well-managed breakfast club and meets the nationally required standard. The school does not tolerate any form of discrimination and all pupils have an equal opportunity to succeed, so the achievement of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is similar to that of other pupils.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The contribution to leadership and management of the governing body is a strength of the school. Its members are knowledgeable about the strengths and areas for development in the school and they use monitoring visits appropriately to check how well the school is doing.
 - The governing body receives detailed achievement reports on reading, writing and mathematics from senior leaders, which indicate clearly where the school has been successful and where further improvement is still required. This helps governors to support and challenge senior leaders on the appropriate issues and helps governors to make good financial decisions, for example, to balance the employment of additional staff against the purchasing of new resources. They make good links between measurable targets for pupils' achievement and staff pay.
 - Governors have a good focus on how effectively the school is spending its money to improve the achievement of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium funding.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 110261 |
| Local authority | Buckinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 426425 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3-11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 215 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Liz Boughton |
| Headteacher | Jennifer Gamble |
| Date of previous school inspection | 13 September 2011 |
| Telephone number | 01494 523218 |
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