

Ashdon Primary School

Ashdon, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 2HB

Inspection dates 23–24 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Throughout the school, pupils' achievement is good and strongly improving, being outstanding in writing.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning and progress.
- Effective systems of care and support and a rich and stimulating range of learning experiences enable all pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they are increasingly effective in helping pupils to become independent learners.
- Pupils get on well together; they feel safe and happy, behaving well in lessons and around the school. They are very proud of their school and have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school benefits from the exceptionally strong leadership of the headteacher and his continuous drive for improvement. He carefully checks the impact that staff have on pupils' achievements and provides effective opportunities for staff to develop their teaching skills.
- The highly effective governing body provides good challenge and professional support. Together with a strong and very committed team of teachers, this ensures the school's continuing success and strong ability to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is not always closely matched to pupils' abilities. When this happens, it holds back progress.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed for pupils to accelerate their own learning and progress in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons, four of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector observed pupils in lessons, at play, at lunch and as they moved around school.
- Discussions were held with staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and other governors, a representative of the local authority and the external consultant who regularly works with the school.
- The inspector held meetings with groups of pupils, listened to pupils read and checked reading progress records.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including records of the monitoring of teaching and of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's view of its performance and the school development plan. In addition, records of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding documentation and reports from the school improvement adviser were reviewed.
- The inspector took account of the 45 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and 22 responses to the staff questionnaire received during the inspection. The inspector also spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This village school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils in each year group varies considerably. Pupils are taught in one reception class and three mixed-age classes.
- Most of the pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional funding allocated for certain groups such as pupils in the care of the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average. The proportion supported through school action is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club not managed by the school, not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement so that a greater proportion of pupils make rapid progress by:
 - ensuring that teachers check, during lessons, that work is always closely matched to the pupils' abilities
 - making sure that teachers' marking and feedback, in mathematics, gives pupils the same opportunities to reflect and improve that they are given in subjects involving written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are typical for their age. Strong teaching and excellent care ensure that they settle quickly and make good progress across all areas of learning. They are well-prepared for learning in Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are on a rising trend and this improvement is set to continue this year.
- Typically, pupils enjoy their learning, settle quickly to work and respond well to the teaching. In 2012, a much higher than average proportion of Year 6 pupils reached the higher Level 5 in writing and mathematics. This is because the most able pupils make good progress. School data and inspection evidence show that in 2013, Year 6 attainment continued to improve strongly, especially in writing and mathematics where several children reached Level 6. Between Years 1 and 6 some pupils make outstanding progress. Increasingly, a higher proportion of pupils reach the higher levels of attainment than those nationally.
- In writing, attainment by Year 6 is above average. A particularly strong focus on extending writing skills following the previous inspection report means that pupils are now very confident in writing at length, in different styles and for different audiences.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is good because it is well taught and promoted effectively throughout the school. Pupils have regular opportunities to read and older pupils support younger children with their reading on a regular basis. Skilled teachers and teaching assistants make sure that pupils have a good knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). The proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in the Year 1 national phonics check in 2012 and 2013 was well above average. Older pupils enjoy reading and read widely at home and in school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Their needs are accurately identified and they receive high quality support so that they achieve as well as other pupils.
- Very few pupils are eligible for the pupil premium in each year group but their progress is carefully and individually checked. Any comparison between the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and that of other pupils in the school would be statistically unreliable because of the small numbers in the school.
- Pupils have secure calculation skills and their problem-solving and investigational skills are improving at a good rate. They apply and use these skills effectively and they make at least good progress in mathematics across the school. However, their achievement in mathematics is still sometimes held back because they are not clear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers' marking is not as good in mathematics as it is in pupils' written work. In lessons, strategies are in place to ensure consistency in the closer match of tasks to individual need and ability. As yet there has not been enough time for these changes to be fully effective.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good and improving but is not yet leading to pupils' consistently outstanding achievement. Scrutiny of workbooks and the school's own monitoring of teaching, together with the inspector's observations, confirm that teaching is consistently good.

- Good knowledge of how young children learn is clear in the Reception Year and as a result, children quickly settle down to become happy, confident learners. Teachers use a wide range of imaginative resources to enable children to adapt their structured play accordingly. For example, children worked together on making dinosaur cages as exhibits in a museum following teacher led activities on saving animals. Other children confidently used tablet computers to look up relevant information on websites.
- Teaching throughout the school enables pupils to develop good communication and language skills because planning for this is good and teachers respond to pupils' willing and enthusiastic attitudes to their work. This underpins pupils' good progress.
- Other adults in the classroom are a great asset; they care deeply about pupils' learning, ask pertinent questions and offer excellent support to ensure pupils progress well. Teachers have high expectations and the quality and presentation of pupils' written work is of a high standard. They provide challenging experiences to enable pupils to do their best. For example, In an outstanding Years 5/6 literacy lesson, pupils were enthused with a love for learning as a result of a high paced, exciting lesson in a World War 2 themed classroom. Questioning did not just check what they had already learned but extended their thinking. Pupils were using the success criteria to judge their next steps as they made good use of the opportunity to edit and improve their work. Effective role modelling and excellent subject knowledge ensured that all pupils made rapid progress.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge ensures that lessons are usually well-planned to meet pupils' needs. Just occasionally, tasks set do not always ensure the needs of all pupils are consistently met to enable them to make better than expected progress.
- Teaching of writing is a particular strength. Pupils are given ample opportunities to write for different purposes and are involved in checking the quality of their own work and that of their classmates. Their written work is marked regularly and to a high standard. The marking of mathematics work is less consistent. Teachers' comments do not always show pupils the next steps in their learning in order to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils are very courteous, friendly and welcoming. They are proud of their school due to the care, guidance and support of all staff. Behaviour is good in and around school.
- Pupils take on roles and responsibilities around the school. Some act as play leaders who help younger children with newly designed games and others help younger pupils with their learning. Pupils are confident and articulate. They participate well in their learning. In the vast majority of lessons, their attitudes to learning are good. Only when work fails to enthuse them do a few become restless.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying. They say that they enjoy lessons and feel well cared for and safe.
- Parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire and those that met with the inspector expressed positive views. They confirmed that they feel the school is a happy, safe place and that the school ensures pupils are well behaved.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides inspirational leadership. Since his appointment in September 2009, there has been a relentless drive to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement. His leadership of teaching is strong; any weaker teaching has been eradicated and all teaching is now at least good, and an increasing proportion is outstanding. As a result, there is a strongly improving trend in pupils' achievement.
- A system of tracking is used very effectively in pupils' progress meetings, so that any weaknesses in pupils' progress are quickly identified and dealt with well. Information about pupils' progress is used to set targets for both pupils and teachers. All teachers have targets related to pupils' performance, and these are taken into account when making decisions about teachers' pay.
- Key Stage leaders know the strengths and issues for development in their areas of responsibility. The school's view of its own performance is accurate and this means that the school improvement priorities are well-focussed to deal with any remaining weaknesses.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are successfully promoted across the school through a rich and varied programme which is well matched to their needs and interests. All pupils are given equal opportunities to succeed. A wide range of well-supported activities and clubs, as well as the special events, and visits add enrichment. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the themed weeks. These have included visitors from the world of work and have increased pupil's knowledge and raised their future aspirations.
- The school is using the new sports funding to improve the quality of the teaching of physical education in the school and to broaden the range of sports activities provided. The intended impact on pupils' health and wellbeing has been carefully identified, although it is too early to measure the effectiveness of the spending.
- The school is a very cohesive community which is improving steadily. Staff say that they feel valued and know what the school is trying to achieve. Parents also value the school highly. One parent, of others, said, 'My children are getting an outstanding education, they feel valued and safe, we are privileged to be part of a lovely school community.'
- The local authority has provided light touch but effective support for this successful school. The school has made good use of an external consultant to make sure improvements are sustained.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very effective in carrying out its responsibilities. Governors are provided with detailed information by the headteacher about all aspects of the school's performance, including pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. They use this information well and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths, as well as high expectations for further improvement. They have made many important decisions, which have included the appointment of the current headteacher. Together with the headteacher they have made improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area, created a technology learning zone and a new classroom. Governors ask challenging questions of the headteacher and other senior leaders to ensure good financial management and sustained pupil progress. They make appropriate use of data to plan the use of resources such as the sports funding. They know how the pupil premium funding is allocated and the impact it is having. They ensure that the school meets all its statutory duties, including those related to safeguarding.

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	114964
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425363

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	108
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Juliette Handley
Headteacher	Gary Brown
Date of previous school inspection	13 November 2008
Telephone number	01799 584219
Fax number	01799 584107
Email address	admin@ashdon.essex.sch.uk

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