

Ashleigh CofE (VC) Primary School

Bevan Road, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 8LJ

Inspection dates

16–17 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Previous instability in leadership and staffing and inconsistent teaching over time have led to a decline in the school's overall effectiveness since the previous inspection.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 requires improvement despite current leaders' strong and decisive actions that are rapidly improving pupils' progress.
- Teaching is not challenging the most able pupils. Despite recent improvements the level of challenge is still too variable.
- Some teaching does not ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve and this limits the progress they make.
- Some pupils are not confident and fluent writers. Their vocabulary is too limited for them to express their ideas.
- The quality of teaching is too inconsistent. Teachers do not consistently plan work that deepens pupils' understanding in mathematics. Consequently, too few pupils reach high standards.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher and deputy headteacher have restored good leadership and demonstrate a relentless drive for improvement. Their strong leadership empowers other leaders and ensures that plans and actions target the right priorities for development.
- Pupils' good and improving behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are quickening their progress.
- Pupils are safe and benefit from strong pastoral care. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from specifically tailored, effective support.
- Governors hold leaders to account robustly and play a strong role in bringing about rapid improvement.
- Children in the early years make good progress due to good teaching and strong leadership.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and secure pupils' consistently good progress by teachers:
 - making sure that pupils, especially the most able, are suitably challenged by the work and activities presented to them
 - sharing existing good practice in accordance with the school's assessment policy so that pupils have a clear understanding of how to improve.
- Improve pupils' progress in mathematics by teachers:
 - improving pupils' basic numeracy skills and extending their ability to use efficient written and mental methods of calculation to solve problems
 - carefully checking how well pupils, especially the most able, are learning and adapting the work and activities provided for them to deepen their understanding.
- Improve pupils' progress and fluency in writing, especially for those who need to catch up, by teachers consistently extending pupils' vocabulary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The fresh and determined leadership of the new headteacher and deputy headteacher has re-established strong and respected leadership this academic year. Their work in developing a wider leadership team and collaborating fully with governors has secured a shared commitment to bring about improvement as quickly as possible.
- Most notably, leaders have strengthened whole-school procedures and raised expectations. They have helped staff to transform pupils' behaviour. As a result, pupils participate in learning much more effectively, responding well to strengthened teaching and quickly overcoming gaps in their previous learning.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported by effective use of additional funding. Leaders, including governors, have also improved the way additional funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils. For example, their increased rigour in working with outside agencies and parents has reduced pupils' absence. Pupils feel valued and know that staff provide equal opportunity and will not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Senior leaders have evaluated the areas in need of improvement accurately. They ensure that school improvement planning sets high expectations of pupils' achievement and provides clear direction for the staff. Leaders, with good support from the local authority and other schools, manage staff performance effectively. They work alongside colleagues, and provide relevant training for teaching and support staff. Some inconsistency in teaching quality remains, but leaders' effective monitoring and guidance have swiftly eradicated weak teaching and are bringing rapid improvement.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes a good range of experiences that motivate and interest pupils and meet their different needs. Staff's current strong focus on extending pupils' vocabulary and calculation skills has not been in place long enough to develop these fully.
- The school promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils develop their moral and social skills by helping others as, for example, anti-bullying ambassadors. They learn about other cultures and beliefs through assemblies and topics such as art and families across the world. Leaders develop pupils' awareness of modern Britain and British values through promoting the school's community atmosphere and values such as respect, tolerance and aspiration.
- Leaders make good use of the primary physical education and sport funding to provide additional training opportunities for staff and to increase the range of sporting activities provided for pupils. Pupils participate well and benefit from additional sports such as tennis, dance and gymnastics. These events have also played a key role in raising pupils' interest and enjoyment of learning at school.
- Parents are very positive about the school and appreciate the improvements being made by the current headteacher. Parents particularly value the school's caring community atmosphere and the way that staff are willing to help if they have any concerns about their children.
- The local authority has provided supportive training for staff and governors. It has

played a more effective role this academic year in helping new leaders to strengthen teaching and assessment procedures to sustain rapid improvement.

Governance of the school

- Governors are well-organised, highly committed and effective. The chair and vice-chair of the governing body provide strong leadership. They promote the governing body's united commitment to the further development of the school.
- This academic year, governors have strongly supported the headteacher's bold and determined actions to widen, clarify and improve staff leadership roles. Governors now more rigorously hold leaders to account for improvements to teaching and pupils' progress. This is helping rapidly to restore the school's effectiveness.
- Governors fulfil their statutory duties diligently and ensure that additional funding is used effectively. Governors also provide good pastoral support to the staff.
- Governors check the school's performance effectively. For example, governors visit the school regularly and examine information on pupils' progress. They take account of reports from the headteacher and the local authority. As a result, governors have an accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have undertaken a full review of safeguarding and have substantially strengthened procedures this academic year. They have ensured that all statutory requirements are met and records are of good quality and kept fully up to date, including, for example, safe recruitment of staff.
- Leaders work very effectively with external agencies to take the necessary actions to keep pupils safe. Staff are particularly diligent and skilled in recognising concerns and supporting pupils at an early stage when circumstances make them vulnerable.
- Leaders ensure that staff and governors receive regular training and have a clear understanding of safeguarding requirements, including how to prevent pupils' radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment have not been consistent or effective enough over time to sustain pupils' good progress across the school. In particular, teaching across key stage 2 has not ensured that pupils develop the writing and mathematical skills of which they are capable. Until recently, leaders have not supported teachers well enough in managing pupils' behaviour. Consequently, for some time, pupils' inconsistent engagement in learning also restricted their progress in some classes.
- The challenge in the work given to some pupils, especially the most able, is not consistently high enough. Variation in the way teachers follow the school's own assessment policy results in some pupils being unclear about what to do next and how

to improve their work.

- On occasion, teachers are not swift enough in adapting activities to deepen pupils' understanding in mathematics and this constrains the progress made by some pupils, especially the most able. Equally, there is still some inconsistency in the teaching of writing because of the lack of emphasis on extending pupils' vocabulary. Both these aspects are clearly identified as priorities in the school's improvement plan and leaders readily recognise that there is more to do.
- Leaders have provided effective training for staff and have radically improved systems for supporting pupils' behaviour. Staff now manage pupils' behaviour effectively and present a stimulating range of experiences that raise pupils' interest and promote their much improved and now good engagement in learning. Teachers and teaching assistants say that they are undertaking their duties with renewed confidence now and have raised their expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- Teachers use questioning well to involve pupils. Adults clearly value and encourage pupils' ideas and responses, which in turn are helping pupils to sustain concentration and demonstrate improved resilience in their work.
- Teachers have responded well to increased training opportunities and now have a clear understanding of the raised curricular expectations. This is evident, for example, in teachers' planning and in their increasingly effective use of assessment to identify suitable next steps in pupils' learning.
- The teaching and learning of phonics and reading are good. Teachers in early years and key stage 1 classes liaise well to ensure that pupils develop their understanding of the sounds that letters represent effectively. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to read at school and encourage and support parents in helping their children to read at home.
- Staff ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-planned additional support and experiences. This ensures that they are included in the full range of school activities, which promotes their confidence and increasingly faster progress.
- Teachers have similarly improved their support of disadvantaged pupils. They carefully assess pupils' starting points and learning needs and work well with teaching assistants to ensure suitable progress in the development of pupils' skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils, parents and staff report that the school's pastoral care and procedures for supporting pupils have been much improved over the past year and are now implemented consistently and effectively. Parents are very confident that staff care about the pupils' well-being and keep them safe.
- Pupils demonstrate a good degree of care and consideration for others and know how to stay safe and to help keep each other safe. For example, pupils fulfil their roles on the school council seriously and readily help each other when they are unwell or

returning after illness.

- Pupils move around the school sensibly and act responsibly during breaktimes even when, as seen during the inspection for example, it is too wet to play outside at lunchtime.
- Some pupils still need support from staff to develop more resilience in their learning, but the improving quality of their work in books and learning in class show that they respond well to the effective guidance they receive.
- Pupils are very proud of their school, respect adults, respond well to instructions and demonstrate good engagement in learning in class. One pupil reflected the improved attitudes to learning now evident in all classes when saying, 'My work is much better than it was last year because I am trying a lot harder now.' The pupils' raised expectations and improved learning are clearly evident in their well-presented work, which they proudly show to visitors to the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Leaders and staff have worked very effectively to raise expectations and provide high-quality provision for those pupils who still need specialist support for their emotional needs. This is clear in the pupils' much improved behaviour, which underpins their increasingly faster progress this academic year.
- Pupils say that they feel very safe at school and that, as one put it, 'staff look after us and sort things out quickly if we are worried about anything'. As a result, bullying is no longer an issue.
- School records show much-reduced incidents of misbehaviour, with the need for exclusion rapidly becoming uncommon.
- Relationships are strong and pupils enjoy playing together. The pupils' increased self-awareness and control is evident in all classes and during assembly, for example when singing hymns in harmony and with respect.
- Leaders have worked successfully with families and outside agencies to reduce significantly persistent absence this academic year and secure a slightly above average level of attendance. As a result, most disadvantaged pupils attend as well as their peers and are taking full advantage of additional support and activities to quicken their progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Standards at the end of key stage 2 declined following the previous inspection and have remained below average over time. Although improving rapidly this academic year, the rate of pupils' progress still varies across key stage 2. This is because staffing has been less stable and teaching less effective at times, for example in Years 3 and 4.
- Pupils are making increasingly good progress in Years 5 and 6 because of teachers' consistently high expectations and pupils' improved engagement in learning. Even so, the improved and closer to average standards reached by pupils do not yet demonstrate good progress from their different starting points. This is particularly the

case in writing and mathematics. Pupils, especially the most able, have not yet sustained rapid progress long enough to overcome past underachievement.

- Across the school, an increased number of pupils are reaching levels of skill expected for their age, reflecting their increasingly rapid progress. This is evident, for example, in the good quality of pupils' handwriting and longer pieces of work. The pupils' improved attitudes and efforts in learning are also seen in their well-presented work in books. Weaker aspects include, for example, the limited range of vocabulary of some pupils which restricts their confidence and fluency in writing. Similarly, in mathematics, some pupils, including the most able, lack the mental calculation skills and strategies needed to solve problems at a deeper level.
- Although pupils' progress has remained stronger across key stage 1 than key stage 2, past instability in leadership and teaching also adversely affected standards. Currently, teachers' raised expectations and pupils' much improved and enthusiastic engagement in learning are quickening the progress of all groups of pupils. However, variation in the level of challenge presented to pupils still limits the progress of the most able pupils in deepening their understanding.
- Over time, the progress of the large number of disadvantaged pupils has lacked consistency. Often this was because of pupils' lower levels of attendance and teaching not fully developing their basic literacy and numeracy skills. This academic year, leaders have ensured more effective use of additional funding to raise pupils' interest in learning, improve attendance and quicken pupils' progress. As a result, past differences in attainment are closing rapidly. However, as with other pupils, those with more ability are not consistently stretched and this limits their progress.
- An above-average proportion of pupils have achieved the expected standard in Years 1 and 2 phonics screening checks. Currently, the teaching of phonics and reading remains a stronger aspect of provision and pupils' outcomes. Pupils in Reception and Year 2 who read to inspectors showed appropriate skill for their age in sounding out letters and blending sounds to read new words. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 read confidently and fluently to reflect their good progress and genuine enjoyment in reading.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made inconsistent progress in the past. However, these pupils now do well because of the additional specialist adult support and tailored activities they are given. They benefit from much improved behaviour and now enjoy their work and learn more confidently.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders of early years have provided consistently effective provision that has sustained the children's good progress since the previous inspection.
- The current leader of early years provides strong leadership and ensures that all the safeguarding and welfare requirements are fully met. Teachers and support staff cooperate well to provide safe, secure learning areas in the classrooms and outside. As a result, children of all abilities show a willingness to 'have a go' that clearly demonstrates that they feel safe. For example, children cooperate sensibly when investigating how objects float in soapy water and take care not to get sand in each

other's eyes when using the sand tray. When questioned, parents readily expressed the view that their children are kept safe, enjoy school and make good progress.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good across the early years Nursery and Reception classes. Teaching and support staff work well together to ensure that all aspects of the curriculum are equally well taught. Staff promote very encouraging relationships with the children and use questioning effectively to strengthen their learning.
- Children behave well and enjoy working and playing together because they are stimulated by a wide variety of interesting learning experiences that enable them to consolidate understanding and explore and develop new skills. For example, during the inspection children were seen to be absorbed and sustaining concentration in activities such as painting, writing about their pictures and working together to set out model train tracks.
- Children develop an interest in books and love of reading at an early age. Records show that their reading skills are supported effectively at school and increasingly at home. During the inspection, children were observed reading with staff, using phonic skills to recognise sounds that are represented by letters and responding well when challenged to explain the meaning of the pictures in the story.
- Teachers liaise well with pre-school providers and parents and check the children's skills carefully to establish an accurate picture of their starting points. These assessments show that children's understanding and skills are below those typical for their age. This is especially evident, for example, in the lower than typical speaking and language skills of most disadvantaged children.
- Staff use initial assessments of children's starting points and undertake regular checks of children's developing skills. This ensures that children, including the disadvantaged, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and, increasingly, the most able, experience a well-planned curriculum that meets their needs and helps them to make good progress towards all the early learning goals.
- Teachers are currently strengthening the focus on extending the children's vocabulary, and on deepening their understanding, especially that of the most able children. By the time they leave Reception, an above-average proportion of children reach a good level of development. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.

School details

Unique reference number	113386
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10005714

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jonathan Broad
Headteacher	Christopher Greenhall
Telephone number	01271 345149
Website	www.ashleighdevon.co.uk
Email address	admin@ashleigh.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–13 September 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- The very large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is well above average.
- Children experience early years provision in a Nursery class and in two Reception classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics

by the end of Year 6.

- The current headteacher commenced his duties at the school in September 2016. The deputy headteacher also began her current role in September 2016.
- The school has experienced significant changes in staffing, including leadership, and governance since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in lessons and were accompanied by the headteacher and the deputy headteacher during many of these observations.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures and the school's self-evaluation.
- The inspectors examined the school's systems for checking progress and records of checks on the quality of teaching.
- The inspectors talked to individual pupils and representative groups of pupils about the school and their work. They listened to individual pupils read and attended an assembly. The inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work across a range of subjects and classes.
- The lead inspector met and held a telephone conversation with members of the governing body. Members of the inspection team also held meetings with school staff, mainly senior and middle leaders. The inspectors spoke informally with several teaching assistants and support staff.
- The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The views expressed in one online response to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and in 12 staff questionnaires were considered. The school's 2017 survey of parents' views was also examined. In addition, the inspectors gathered the views of several parents during informal meetings at the school.

Inspection team

Alexander Baxter, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Breeze	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Gannon	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Green	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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