



Ash Hill Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 110261
LEA Buckinghamshire LEA
Inspection number 278394
Inspection dates 28 June 2006 to 29 June 2006
Reporting inspector Charalambos Loizou AI

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Herbert Road
School category	Community		High Wycombe
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		HP13 7HT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01494 523218
Number on roll	198	Fax number	01494 537906
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mrs Clare Martens
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Miss Jennifer Smailes

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school serving an area of social and economic disadvantage. Most pupils are of White British heritage and other pupils come from a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. Over one third of the pupils speak English as an additional language and a small but significant number are in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times is high. An above average percentage of pupils has learning difficulties and disabilities, although the percentage with a statement of special educational need is average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is similar to that of most schools. The headteacher has been in post since the start of this school term.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school's evaluation that it provides a satisfactory education and sound value for money. There is satisfactory achievement and, although below average, standards are improving. Inconsistencies in the pace and challenge of lessons prevents standards from being higher, particular in writing and mathematics. Pupils make good progress in their personal development and mature into well behaved young people. Parents think well of the school, one reflecting the views of most, 'Ash Hill children are a pleasure to be with, and are well behaved'. Attendance rates are below average and this affects the progress of pupils who miss time in school. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do well because they are supported well and have clear learning targets. There is good support for those in the early stages of learning English, who make good progress as a result. Provision and standards in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory and the children make satisfactory progress in early language, communication and mathematics. The teaching is satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching, particularly in Years 2 and 6, but some lessons do not provide tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities so progress slows. Teachers keep a range of assessments but these are not being used well enough to ensure that all pupils reach their targets. Leadership and management are satisfactory. In a short time, the headteacher has earned the respect of pupils, parents and staff. Governors provide satisfactory support and are very committed to the school. Checking systems and monitoring by governors and staff are in place but not systematic enough to ensure that all pupils do as well as they are able. Standards are going up and improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. This demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the teaching and monitoring of lessons to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards, particularly in writing and mathematics.
- Sharpen and refine assessment to guide teachers towards providing tasks and targets that are better matched to the abilities of the pupils.
- Improve attendance rates.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall and is good for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those in the early stages of learning English. Standards are below average although the pupils make satisfactory progress in relation to their starting points. Reception children make satisfactory progress. Pupils start school with language, communication and mathematical skills that are well below those expected for their age. By the time reception children start Year 1, standards are still below those expected, particularly in early reading, writing and mathematics but they achieve well and reach the standards expected in personal, social and emotional development.

Last year's national assessments and tests show below average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, although results show an improving trend. Targets and support for pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and for those learning English as an additional language, are well matched to their needs so they make good progress. For other pupils, particularly those who have the potential to reach or exceed expected levels in writing and mathematics, targets are not always accurate or challenging enough, reflecting weaknesses in teaching and assessment.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they feel safe. They are confident that their views, thoughts and feelings will be heard and acted on. Relationships are good. Teachers and learning support assistants provide good role models and support pupils well. Pupils have good attitudes to learning and mostly behave well. A small minority display challenging behaviour but teachers use consistent strategies to deal successfully with this. Attendance is below average, due in part to families who take holidays during term time. This disrupts the learning of pupils who miss school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Through assemblies and the celebration of faiths and festivals they gain good moral values and understand about living in a diverse community. Older pupils keep special 'thought books' which help them to respect each other's concerns or points of view. Year 2 pupils enjoyed their special assembly, performed in front of parents and the whole school. This encourages the pupils to appreciate the work of others. Acting as 'playtime pals', fund raising and participation in area musical and sporting events, allow pupils to make a positive contribution in school and within the community. Pupils satisfactorily develop basic skills in literacy, number and information and communication technology (ICT) that will prepare them for life beyond school. Pupils are sure about how to be safe and healthy and learn to enjoy exercise and sport.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall and is consistently good in Years 2 and 6. The long term effect of the teaching enables pupils to make satisfactory progress. In some lessons, teaching lacks pace and tasks are not matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. These inconsistencies result in a variable pace of learning. Pupils are well behaved and show good attitudes because the teaching is having a positive effect on their personal development. In good lessons, tasks are fast paced, enjoyable and challenge all pupils. Pupils in Year 2 quickly improved their knowledge of letter sounds stimulated by the story of the 'Jolly Witch'. Pupils in Year 1 improved their punctuation by using poems to model good writing. Teachers plan their lessons diligently but assessment is not always used to identify appropriate targets for pupils of average or

higher ability. This is evident in some workbooks where an over-use of worksheets and undemanding time-filling activities slow the progress of pupils who have the potential to reach higher levels in writing and mathematics. Pupils who have learning difficulties make good progress because they are well supported by skilled teaching assistants. Specialist teaching to support pupils learning English as an additional language is effective, ensuring they also make good progress. Increasingly, teachers are making good use of ICT to enhance pupils' learning and pupils are given good opportunities to comment on their own learning. Pupils in Year 6 often assess their own work as they did when judging the multi-media presentation of other pupils in a good ICT lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets the needs of most pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are learning to speak English as an additional language. The Foundation Stage curriculum allows the children to achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development and make satisfactory progress in other areas of learning. Teachers are beginning to make links between subjects in order to make learning more interesting but this is not consistent because teaching is not sufficiently creative in all classes. More is needed to improve writing and mathematics standards for pupils of average and higher ability. Pupils have regular ICT lessons and are increasingly using computers to support their learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection.

The school extends its curriculum through a good range of enrichment activities and after school clubs. Visits, visitors and residential visits all add to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. During the inspection, pupils in Year 6 enjoyed a day-long sports event at the partner secondary school. These experiences, together with learning in personal, social and health education, and the emphasis on staying safe and healthy, teach skills that will benefit pupils' future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of personal care and support is good. Pupils speak warmly of the trust they have in all staff. One parent reflected the very positive views of many when writing, 'My son is bounding ahead due to the help and encouragement of his teachers'. Pupils particularly value the support of the learning mentor who supports those with emotional and behavioural difficulties and of the language support teacher who supports those in the early stages of learning English. The school is also successful in enabling pupils who join the school at different times to settle quickly and learn effectively. Arrangements for the safety and protection of pupils are strong, including the support given for looked-after children. Health and safety procedures are effective and reviewed regularly. Teachers monitor pupils' personal and academic development but the information is not used consistently to set specific, individual targets for all pupils. Well-planned personal, social and health education lessons teach pupils how

to take care of themselves. Older pupils appreciate how they are helped and guided in making safe and healthy lifestyle choices.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. In the short time the headteacher has been in post, she has provided a clear vision for bringing about school improvement. A revised improvement plan is very focused. It has measurable criteria for staff and governors to gauge how well the school is doing to raise standards and improve the quality of teaching. Self-evaluation is generally accurate although the lack of systematic monitoring up to now has not accurately assessed the impact of some aspects of teaching and the curriculum. Governors are committed and involved in the school, although up to now monitoring has lacked the necessary rigour to ensure the teaching is consistently good. Both staff and governors have done well to sustain a rise in standards over the last two years and, together with the headteacher's high expectations and well focused priorities, the school is well placed to secure further improvements to accelerate the progress of all pupils. Surveys of parents' views are undertaken and used as a basis for improvement. The school demonstrates satisfactory capacity to improve given its recent track record of rising standards and the satisfactory progress made since the last inspection. The headteacher has made a good start in establishing sharp and crisp priorities which are now embedded in staff performance management. Priorities are focused on raising pupils' achievement first, and developing further the management of the school by distributing responsibilities to all staff so they all play a part in school improvement. Resources and support staff are well deployed and resources for ICT have improved since the school's last inspection.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	3	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Pupils

The inspectors were pleased to visit your school. You made us feel really welcome and a special thank you to the many pupils who spoke to us and to your parents for writing nice things about the school.

We believe that yours is a satisfactory school. These are the best things we found about your school: * It helps you to grow into well behaved and polite young people who are keen to learn and try hard. * You really like school and enjoy going on special visits like the recent sports day at a local secondary school for Year 6. * Teachers and other helpers take good care of you to make sure you stay safe. * Your parents are pleased with the way the staff help you to settle in school and they enjoy coming to special assemblies like the one we saw performed by pupils in Year 2.

These are the things we have asked your teachers to do to improve your school even more: * We feel that in some classes teachers could give you harder work because you are capable of doing more, especially in writing and mathematics. * Your teachers work hard to find ways to check how well you are doing. We would like them to give you work at the right level to help you all reach your targets and do even better. * Most of you come to school everyday and you get special rewards to encourage good attendance. We have asked the school to work closely with families to make sure attendance improves. I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Charalambos Loizou

Lead inspector