



Ashlands Church of England First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123749
LEA Somerset
Inspection number 281550
Inspection dates 22 May 2006 to 22 May 2006
Reporting inspector Lorna Brackstone AI

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

Type of school	First	School address	North Street
School category	Voluntary controlled		Crewkerne
Age range of pupils	4 to 9		Somerset TA18 7AL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01460 73437
Number on roll	141	Fax number	01460 73437
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	4 October 1999	Headteacher	Mrs Carole Wills

Age group 4 to 9	Inspection dates 22 May 2006 - 22 May 2006	Inspection number 281550
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashlands is a small school that mainly serves a social housing area. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. However, this does not reflect the low socio-economic status of most of the parents, many of whom have not accessed adult education. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities is below average. No pupils use English as an additional language. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had been in place for just over two terms. The newly appointed deputy headteacher had been in place for five weeks.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory, in keeping with its own judgement. It provides satisfactory value for money.

In the Foundation Stage, the quality of provision is satisfactory and although standards are still below expected levels at the end of Reception, children achieve satisfactorily in relation to their prior attainment. In Years 1 to 4, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory overall as a result of sound teaching. Recent initiatives by the leadership and management have been successful in improving the quality of teaching. This has helped standards in writing to improve and has helped the more able pupils to achieve better. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always give individuals enough guidance as to how they can improve their work. Annual written reports do not give parents enough information about how their children are progressing.

The pupils are provided with a safe and supportive environment that is bright and cheery due to a recent decorating programme. The school has taken effective action to modify the curriculum so that it relates to the pupils' own experiences. Personal development is satisfactory. Pupils have a strong awareness of the difference between right and wrong. They respond well to the systems in place that celebrate good work and behaviour. However, pupils do not participate in decision-making activities or take on sufficient responsibilities within the school. Systems for monitoring pupils' absence are not secure and, as a result, pupil attendance is inadequate.

Although overall improvement has been unsatisfactory since the last inspection, parents feel the school is now improving at a rapid pace. The new headteacher's clear vision for the school's future development, the good quality actions she has put in place and the sound management structure she has now established mean the school is well placed to move forward.

What the school should do to improve further

- provide more opportunities for the pupils to take responsibility, develop their independence, and be more involved in making decisions within school
- develop more robust ways of improving attendance
- develop whole-school assessment procedures and improve teachers' marking so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are average and achievement is satisfactory overall. Children start school with skills that are below the expected levels. Personal and social development, communication and language skills and creative development are particularly weak. Children make sound progress in the Reception class, but standards are still below expected levels by the time they start Year 1. Good teaching enables pupils to achieve

well in Years 1 and 2, by the end of which they attain average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Over the last year, the school has been especially successful in improving the quality of writing for this age group and in improving the achievement of higher-attaining pupils to a satisfactory level. Pupils make sound progress in Years 3 and 4, by the end of which they attain average standards in reading and writing and above average standards in mathematics. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities achieve satisfactorily because of sound quality programmes to support them. The school has identified correctly that the boys do not always do as well as girls and has put sound strategies in place to address this. In partnership with the middle school, challenging targets are now being set for Year 4 pupils to reach in Year 6.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. In discussion with the pupils, all were very positive about the school and felt that lessons were often exciting and fun. Art is a particular favourite and they are very proud of their work, which is valued and displayed around the school. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles. They understand the importance of regular exercise, and Year 1 and Year 2 pupils appreciate the fruit provided for them during the morning break. Pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how important it is to adopt safe practices in their work and play and in life outside school. They are prepared satisfactorily for later life and economic well-being through the acquisition of key skills such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.

The school is an orderly community, with pupils displaying care and concern for others. Assemblies, classroom routines, school rules and the curriculum help the pupils to gain satisfactory overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The strong focus on promoting their moral awareness results in pupils developing positive attitudes and satisfactory behaviour. However, there are not enough opportunities created for them to become involved in school life, within the local community or to learn skills independently. Attendance is unsatisfactory. The headteacher has started to put into place a range of strategies to improve attendance, but these are not yet sufficiently rigorous. Too many parents continue to take their children out of school for holidays, and a significant minority fail to attend regularly. As a consequence, pupils' learning is disrupted.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Pupils understand what they are going to learn in each session, because of teachers' clear explanations. The school has worked effectively to improve teaching over the last year. Work planned by teachers is now

better matched to the needs of all pupils. For example, the more able pupils are achieving better and boys are much more engaged in their learning because they are given topics such as 'superheroes', which interest them. Pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants and this enables full class involvement. Good use is made of interactive whiteboards to make learning interesting. At times, teacher expectations are not high enough and this means that the pupils are not sufficiently challenged in their work. This is evident in some workbooks where work is left unfinished or untidy. Some examples of good marking of pupils' work were seen. However, too often teachers do not clearly show in their marking how pupils can improve their work. There is no whole-school approach to assessing pupils' progress and therefore there is a lack of information to guide teachers with their planning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and responsive to local circumstances, for instance, by linking work to supermarket visits and trips to a nearby farm, but the school is aware that this could be developed further. Pupils keep healthy and safe because their knowledge and skills are developed satisfactorily in science lessons and in personal, social, health and emotional sessions. The curriculum for the Foundation Stage satisfactorily ensures that children learn through exploration and play-related activities.

A 'garden project' has been particularly successful in involving parents in the children's learning and encouraging the development of speaking and listening skills. However, the school is aware that provision for outdoor play needs to be developed further.

The Foundation Stage approach has been extended well into Year 1, enabling a smooth change from the Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1. Pupils appreciate the satisfactory range of clubs that are available to them during lunchtimes, but the school is aware that the opportunities available could be further extended.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The arrangements for care, guidance and support of pupils, including procedures for child protection, are satisfactory. There are high levels of care and concern for the well-being of all pupils. Pupils' achievements, their good deeds and commendable behaviour are awarded and then celebrated by 'golden leaves' that are displayed on a tree for all to see. This is well received by the pupils and is contributing to the good learning ethos in the school.

Recent risk assessment has led to a visible improvement to the security of the site. A good start has been made in literacy to help the pupils understand what they need to work on in order to improve their writing skills. However, there is limited guidance given to pupils to show them how to improve in all other subjects. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory because the comments do not give specific information on progress.

Targets for improvement are unhelpful because they do not identify what the next step in the pupils' learning should be.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher is leading the school well because she has a clear understanding of what needs to be improved and has started to systematically rectify these issues. The headteacher has been proactive in gaining the views of the parents, many of whom feel that she is 'doing a great job'. Good use has been made of newly introduced strategies to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and these inform performance management procedures. The headteacher recognised rightly that the school environment needed immediate improvement to make it more child friendly and has worked successfully with staff to achieve this.

The newly appointed deputy headteacher is an effective Key Stage 2 teacher who understands what needs to be done to maintain pupil progress in Years 3 and 4. Subject leadership is new, but teachers have gained a satisfactory understanding of their role. For example, they understand the importance of using data to identify whole-school improvement issues to ensure that all pupils are given the best chance to achieve as well as they can. However, they have yet to monitor the strengths and areas for development in their own subjects across the school.

The headteacher has worked well to clarify and improve governors' roles in managing the school. They now carry out their roles satisfactorily because they understand more about school life through visits to school and working closely with staff. They have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are proactive in moving it forward. Given the good leadership and management of the headteacher, the commitment of staff and governors and the accurate understanding of the needs of the school, it has a good capacity to improve.

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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?	3	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	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	4	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?	3	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	No
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	No
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

Thank you for the part you played in the inspection of your school. We very much enjoyed meeting you and getting to know your school.

These are the things we liked about your school:

you like school and you feel that your teachers are friendly

the teachers provide helpful rules and reward systems that help you know what is right and wrong

you are looked after in a safe environment and you know that the adults in school will listen to your worries and concerns

your headteacher and deputy headteacher know what needs to be done to make sure that all of you have the best possible education.

These are the things we have asked the school to do to make it even better:

provide opportunities for you to take more responsibility. We think you should be more involved in making decisions about school life

improve the attendance of the pupils who do not attend school as frequently as they should
make sure that your teachers keep an eye on your progress in all subjects.

develop the ways in which teachers let you know how you can improve and give your parents a full picture of how you are getting on

Thank you again for helping us find out more about your school and best wishes for the future.