



Ashurst Wood Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 125929
Local Authority West Sussex
Inspection number 282025
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	School Lane
School category	Community		Ashurst Wood
Age range of pupils	4-11		East Grinstead RH19 3QW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01342 822584
Number on roll (school)	117	Fax number	01342 825230
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Christine Williams
		Headteacher	A D Barnes
Date of previous school inspection	24 January 2000		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashurst Wood is a below-average-sized primary school where the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is average. The proportion of pupils joining the school other than at the usual time is above average and a significant proportion of these pupils have learning difficulties. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school is average. The school has recently won a national award for its international links.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's effectiveness is satisfactory. Pupils reach broadly average standards and achievement is satisfactory. The school has accurately identified its strengths and areas for improvement, although its view of its own effectiveness is generous because it does not give enough weight to pupils' achievements. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Strong pastoral leadership promotes pupils' good personal development, well-being and behaviour. School leaders are taking effective action to make sure the drop in standards caused by a period of staffing disruption last year does not happen again.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory. By the time children start Year 1, standards meet expectations, except for writing. Children's progress in the Reception class slows in writing because basic skills, including spelling and handwriting, are not taught well enough. Pupils' steadier progress in the rest of the school leads to broadly average standards in English and mathematics by Years 2 and 6, although, in Year 2, standards in writing remain below average because of continuing weaknesses in spelling and handwriting. There is little extended writing for more capable pupils by Year 2 and this limits their progress. Whilst the teaching of writing skills is satisfactory in Years 1 and 2, this is not sufficient to make sure pupils catch up from their earlier underachievement. By Year 6, pupils write fluently for a range of purposes, although lower-attaining pupils still have some difficulty with spelling.

Teaching methods make learning interesting and enjoyable. However, when teachers teach the whole class together, the work for lower-attaining pupils is sometimes too hard. This prevents them learning as much as they should. The satisfactory curriculum gives pupils good opportunities to take part in out-of-school activities, including sport. High quality international links enable pupils to learn about the world and how other people live. The school corresponds regularly with schools in America and Jamaica. The school's provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is good. Teachers use computers well to support pupils in their learning. Pupils are helped to be healthy and physically active through a strong emphasis on these areas.

Pupils are well cared for and kept safe. Relationships are good and the strong family ethos of the school helps pupils to feel secure. The school's systems for checking pupils' achievements are satisfactory, although recording systems are cumbersome. This prevents school leaders and staff readily evaluating pupils' progress through the school and gets in the way of them evaluating the extent of any improvements. Assessment systems have been improved this year for Reception children. However, past faults in the system caused senior leaders to miss weaknesses in children's progress and as a result these were not tackled quickly enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve standards in writing for pupils in Reception to Year 2 by more rigorous teaching of basics and improving the level of challenge for more- capable pupils.

- Provide assessment records which show standards and progress in each class and across classes so better checks can be made on pupils' progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching by matching lower-attaining pupils' work more closely to their needs when the whole class is taught together.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children's attainment on entry to Reception is in line with expectations and, by Year 6, they reach average standards in English and mathematics.

By the end of Reception, most children reach the standards expected, except in writing, where standards are below average because weaknesses in teaching basic spelling and letter formation prevent children making a better start. In other areas of learning, children's progress is satisfactory. Lower-attaining Year 1 pupils' progress sometimes slows because their reading books are too hard or easy.

Standards in Year 2 are average in reading and mathematics but below average in writing. This is because of the weaknesses that pupils start with in Year 1 and the fact that the more-capable pupils do not get enough opportunities to write longer pieces and so practise their skills more. Pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6 is satisfactory and in the last few years, standards in English and mathematics have been broadly average. However, in 2006 national tests, the school's own assessments indicated more-capable pupils in Year 6 did not achieve well enough in English, especially in writing. The school responded to this by making sure that teaching paid closer attention to improving spelling and extended writing opportunities. This is raising achievement, especially for more-capable pupils, and is helping pupils to make up some lost ground.

Pupils with learning difficulties achieve satisfactorily. There is some good extra support through catch-up programmes in literacy and numeracy but lower attainers' progress occasionally slows in literacy and numeracy lessons when work is too hard. Targets are challenging for English but too modest for mathematics, with not enough expected of the higher-attaining pupils.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils behave well in class and around the school and relate well to each other. They work and play together safely and say they feel secure in school. Pupils gain good understanding of healthy lifestyles through the school's provision for sport and for teaching them about nutrition. Pupils enjoy school. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils develop a good understanding of Christianity and other world faiths. The school council is well organised and provides good opportunities for pupils to contribute to decision making in school. Pupils make a good contribution to the community through fundraising. Particularly impressive is the way they entertain elderly village residents during harvest celebrations. On these occasions,

pupils serve the residents with soup they have made from their school garden produce. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory. The development of economic understanding and of that of the world of work is less developed, with only satisfactory progress being made in acquiring basic skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers manage their pupils well. Their explanations are clear and informative and they make good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. They use information and communication technology (ICT) well to help pupils learn. Lesson planning is detailed but in practice teaching does not always build on what pupils already know. The range of ability is particularly wide in each class in this school and teaching usually caters better for pupils' needs during group work than when the whole class is taught together. Work is sometimes too hard for lower-attaining pupils during this time and this slows their progress. More- capable pupils are occasionally given too much direction during group work and this inhibits independent work and problem solving. There is some good support by classroom assistants during group work and this is particularly effective when pupils work in the computer suite. Teachers' expectations for neat work are not always high enough and sometimes pupils' work is untidy.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

There have been significant improvements in the provision for ICT since the previous inspection and teachers are now using this well to support pupils' learning. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of clubs, visits and visitors. It has a practical base and this brings relevance to learning. For example, the school garden is used particularly well for enabling pupils to understand biological aspects of science. The international dimension is very strong and succeeds in giving the pupils experiences beyond their locality. The curriculum is broad. It is regularly enriched by specialist teaching by a modern foreign language specialist from the local secondary school. However, overall provision is satisfactory because of only satisfactory provision in literacy and numeracy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school takes good care of its pupils. There are strong procedures for promoting health and safety and pupils' personal welfare. The friendly atmosphere and strong sense of community help them feel secure. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils with behavioural difficulties, including the significant proportion who are later entrants to the school, are well supported so they behave well. The quality of guidance to help

pupils make progress in their academic work is satisfactory. Assessment in Reception has been improved and is now adequate. However, weaknesses in the past have prevented the school fully measuring children's attainment on entry and checking how well they are doing. Assessment in the rest of the school is thorough but teachers' recording systems for their regular assessments vary from class to class. There is no single tracking document which shows how well pupils progress as they move through the school. This prevents staff and school leaders readily making checks on pupils' progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and her colleagues have taken effective steps in response to last year's disappointing results in Year 2 and in English for more-capable pupils in Year 6, although there is still work to do. Staffing is now settled. Staff are working purposefully together to improve achievement after significant staffing changes last year owing to the longer-term absences of several teachers. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory.

The school's self-evaluation is mostly accurate. However, the systems for analysing pupils' achievement are cumbersome and prevent teachers, school leaders and governors easily evaluating pupils' standards and progress as they move through the school. This limits the ability of the school to evaluate the success of its strategies for raising achievement. It also prevents school leaders and teachers keeping a close watch on the proportions of pupils reaching satisfactory and higher standards in each year group and evaluating what must be done to raise achievement where necessary.

Governance is satisfactory. There is a relatively new governing body and many governors are still receiving training for their roles. They are very aware that they play an active part in the life of the school but do not yet challenge the school enough about the pupils' achievement.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

As you know, we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed seeing you at work and play and talking with some of you. The school gives you a satisfactory education.

These are some of the things we found out about your school:

- You make satisfactory progress in English and mathematics.
- You behave well and are kind to others and enjoy your lessons.
- Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons are interesting and you use computers well.
- The curriculum gives you really good opportunities to learn about other countries and different people.
- The school cares for you well and keeps you safe.

Here are the ways we are asking the school to improve:

- Improve spelling and writing for those of you in Reception and Years 1 and 2.
- Make better checks on how well you are learning.
- For a few of you who find English and mathematics difficult, make sure your work is not too hard.

You can help your teachers by making sure you improve your spelling and handwriting by always trying your best.

Thank you again for your help and for being so polite and friendly.