

Ashfield Valley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105783
Local Authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	287327
Inspection date	15 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Ann Sharpe

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs S Siddique
Headteacher	Miss E Palmer
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	New Barn Lane Rochdale Lancashire OL11 1TA
Telephone number	01706 522758
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils attending this average sized urban school are predominantly from minority ethnic backgrounds, with most children being of Pakistani heritage. Many pupils speak English as an additional language and about one fifth is at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, and the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average.

The school holds the Investors in People award, a Healthy Schools award and an ActiveMark Gold award. It also has formal recognition for accelerating the progress of bilingual learners and an award from Rochdale Civic Society for developing the environment.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's view of itself as a good school is correct. Staff and governors understand the social circumstances of the community that the school serves, and this helps them to know how best to provide for pupils' differing learning needs. Pupils achieve well from their well below average starting points, and standards are average by Year 6 in English, mathematics and science. This represents good achievement, considering that bilingual children have a lot of catching up to do when they start Nursery. The good quality curriculum ensures that pupils have plenty of opportunities to improve their talking skills and to learn other basic skills needed in order to achieve well across the subjects. Similarly, a good standard of care for pupils as individuals ensures that they are happy at school and thrive.

A main reason for pupils' success is that the good quality and standards seen in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) continue through Years 1 to 6, where teaching and learning are also good. Teachers and caring support staff move pupils' learning along at a brisk rate, especially learning to communicate with others in the English language. Although boys reach higher standards than girls do in mathematics, the school is aware of this, and there are outline plans to begin to bridge the gap in the future. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of sensitive and individually tailored support by teachers, classroom assistants and staff from support agencies.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being help them to achieve well. Attendance is improving as a result of the school's firm stance on restricting family holidays during term time and the careful planning of school holidays so that they coincide with religious festivals. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to take part in all the activities available to them. Pupils love being 'playground pals' and looking after younger ones. They say that they feel safe and can always find someone to go to for help if they are worried about anything. They have a good knowledge and understanding of how to keep healthy and safe. The school council gives pupils a genuine voice in improving the school, and staff take good account of their views on a wide range of issues. As a result, pupils' behaviour is mainly good, and they have positive attitudes towards learning. Teachers do not always take full advantage of pupils' willingness to learn. However, learning targets set are not always clear and pupils are not consistently involved in checking their own learning. The school has outline plans to tighten existing procedures.

Since the previous inspection, good leadership, management and governance have kept the school moving forward, including making much needed improvements to the premises. The headteacher and other senior leaders have ensured that standards improve in line with the national trend - a significant challenge and achievement for a school with so many bilingual pupils. Although the school keeps a very close eye on standards, procedures for gaining a clear overall picture of how much progress pupils are making over time are not as advanced. Nevertheless, the school's successful track record means that there is good capacity to continue to improve in the future. The school gives good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that standards in mathematics for girls are at least in line with those of boys by Year 6.
- Set pupils clear learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics and involve them fully in checking their progress towards them.

- Gain a clearer view of the rate of progress made by pupils across the school in reading, writing and mathematics.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter Nursery with skills well below those expected of children their age and poor talking and social skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, although when they start Year 1, standards are below average. Pupils' good progress continues through Years 1 to 6, so that by the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average. The school met challenging targets for the Year 6 national tests in 2006, even with an unusually high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and bilingual learners make good progress because of the well-organised support they receive. Consequently, pupils in Years 2 and 6 are on track to maintain the school's good level of performance in national assessments and tests. Since the previous inspection, Year 6 results have kept pace with the national trend. This represents good achievement, when taking account pupils' starting points, especially in English and science. Boys do better than girls in mathematics tests, because a higher proportion of boys than girls reach the standard expected for their age. Nevertheless, the school does well to ensure that most pupils reach at least the level expected for their age in national tests overall.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour and their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development help them to achieve well. Attendance has improved this year and is now average. Pupils enjoy school and have a wide range of favourite subjects and interests. Pupils in Year 1, for example, enjoyed taking part in their class assembly. They were proud to perform for other pupils, staff and parents. Older pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep healthy and safe, for example, by eating fruit and vegetables, drinking water and avoiding 'junk food'. Members of the school council make sensible suggestions about how to make their school even better. Improvements to the outside play areas, for example, have taken account of pupils' views and interests. A growing understanding of democracy, charitable fundraising and good achievement in literacy and numeracy, stand pupils in good stead for the future. Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to work on extending pupils' ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to work independently.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning have improved since the previous inspection, and they are now more consistently good across the school. Teachers put a lot of emphasis upon helping pupils to enjoy learning basic skills and to extend their use of the English language. This is one of the reasons why Year 6 pupils do so well in national tests. Teachers have strong expertise in teaching literacy and numeracy. Children in Reception thoroughly enjoy learning to recognise letters of the alphabet and reading simple words. Similarly, older pupils enjoy the challenge of solving mathematical problems and explaining their answers. Teachers and enthusiastic support staff work together to ensure that pupils behave well and have the help they need to complete their

work. This ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and bilingual learners achieve as well as other pupils. Although pupils know what teachers expect the class to learn in each lesson, they are unsure about what they must do to build on their own personal attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. One of the school's main priorities is to ensure that setting pupils learning targets in these areas has a greater impact on their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is adapted to the cultural and learning needs of pupils from all ethnic groups and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that they achieve well. Strong links with members of the community and other schools enable the school to offer an increasingly broad curriculum. Consequently, pupils say that opportunities to attend clubs, work with visiting sports and music specialists, and go out of school on trips increase their enjoyment of school. As a result of strong commitment to widening pupils' vocabulary and extending their ability to express themselves through talking and writing, pupils' writing skills are improving. The curriculum for personal, social, health and citizenship education in Years 1 to 6 makes a good contribution to pupils' achievements in all aspects of personal development and well-being, particularly their behaviour. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved provision for the more capable pupils, so that they now usually achieve well. The school is at an early stage of planning to meet the learning needs of the few gifted and talented pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The priority that the school gives to this aspect of its work is seen in well-thought-out procedures for safeguarding, protecting and supporting pupils. It is also seen in the vigilant way that staff watch over the progress of groups of pupils with specific needs, such as those requiring help from bilingual support workers. Close working relationships with staff from outside agencies ensure that pupils, parents and carers have access to specialist help when they need it. The school takes good account of pupils' views, for example, by finding out what pupils think about bullying and trying to find out why girls do not do as well as boys in mathematics. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and pupils say that this helps them to improve. Teachers do not always make pupils fully aware of what they have to do in order to reach a higher level of work, however, and pupils are not fully involved in checking their own learning and progress over time.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school has recently revised its leadership structure to form a school improvement team, consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and two new senior staff. Together, they ensure that the school continues to lift pupils' achievement, for example, by making sure that their learning is not held back because of unavoidable staff absences. Since the previous inspection, the school has improved on several fronts, particularly a thoughtful refurbishment of the premises. Standards have risen broadly in line with the national picture - quite an achievement, considering the barriers to learning that some pupils must overcome. The school continues to work on areas they see as 'eternal themes', such as promoting pupils' independence. Staff keep a close eye on pupils' attainment by reviewing evidence from several valid sources.

This helps them to pinpoint, correctly, where improvements are most needed, such as the performance of girls in mathematics. Procedures for measuring how much progress pupils are making, however, are not as tight, and staff know that they need refining.

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Annex A

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?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

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	2

The quality of provision

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

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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Inspection of Ashfield Valley Primary School, Rochdale, OL11 1TA

I really enjoyed my visit to your school. Thank you for talking to me and for answering all my questions so thoughtfully. I would like to say a special thank you to the school council, who missed some of their time listening to the special 'Viking' visitor so that they could talk to me. I particularly enjoyed watching the Year 1 assembly, and was impressed by how well you all listened.

I agree with you that Ashfield Valley Primary is a good school. It is good because adults make sure that you enjoy coming, work hard and learn a lot in lessons. They care about you and make sure that you are safe and happy. I was impressed with how much you know about keeping healthy and safe. Congratulations on receiving all those special awards.

You are right to say that teachers help you to learn. This is one reason why you do so well in your national assessments and tests when you get to Year 2 and Year 6. Year 6 children do especially well in science, and writing is improving for all children. Boys do better than some girls do in mathematics, and I have asked the school to make sure that girls catch up with boys in mathematics. Nevertheless, you all do well with improving your talking skills, especially understanding the special words you meet in subjects, such as mathematics.

When I asked some of you about your learning targets, you were not sure what they were. I have asked the school to help you to find out how well you are doing by checking your work against your own learning targets in reading, writing and mathematics. I have also asked the school to measure just how quickly children across the whole school are learning.

You can help by continuing to try hard in all your lessons, remembering your learning targets and asking teachers if you are learning quickly enough.