



Athelstan Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 107083
Local Authority Sheffield
Inspection number 287707
Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Philip Cole

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Richmond Park Way
School category	Community		Sheffield
Age range of pupils	4–11		South Yorkshire S13 8HH
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0114 2692301
Number on roll (school)	467	Fax number	0114 2548710
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs C Noble
		Headteacher	Mr A Woodward
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

Age group 4–11	Inspection dates 24–25 January 2007	Inspection number 287707
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large urban school that serves an area of mainly privately owned housing. Most of the pupils are White British. About 10% of pupils have minority ethnic backgrounds; they are mainly Black and Asian, and a small number of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is similar to the average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Athelstan Primary is a satisfactory school that is improving; it has some significant strengths. Pupils clearly enjoy being in school and are particularly enthusiastic about the wide range of clubs and out-of-class activities that are provided. These include some excellent sporting opportunities that more than justify the school's achievement of the nationally recognised Sports Mark, and enable talented pupils to succeed at local, regional and even national levels. Pupils appreciate that the school listens to what they have to say and they are proud that they are making it better, such as through their ideas for quiet play areas and better playground equipment. They enjoy contributing to its life by working in the 'job squad' and being monitors and playground friends. Parents are supportive of the school, although a small number have concerns about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors judge behaviour to be satisfactory and were reassured that, although pupils reported some bullying, they were confident that it is dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to do to stay fit and healthy and are developing well the basic skills and personal and social qualities needed for their future lives.

Pupils join school with levels of attainment in line with those expected for their age. Achievement is good because, by the time pupils leave school, their standards in English, mathematics and science are above average. This reflects the good progress that pupils make in Key Stage 2. The picture for younger pupils has been different over several years, with weaker progress across the Reception and infant classes. This has led to past results in Year 2 tests that have been significantly below national averages. Recent improvements in teaching are now enabling children in the Reception classes to make good progress, particularly in the areas of language and mathematical development. Significant weaknesses in these areas of learning had previously contributed to the disappointing results in Year 2 tests. Inspectors judge that pupils in Key Stage 1 are now making satisfactory progress but they are still reaching below average standards.

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. In Reception classes, sharply focused adult-led sessions and well planned, related play activities underpin the improvements in the progress children now make. Elsewhere in school, progress is more dependent on the good skills and expertise of individual teachers rather than the consistent implementation of the appropriate agreed teaching and learning strategies. This leads to the quality of teaching and learning, whilst still good overall, being more variable than it should be. Teaching is more effective in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1.

The good quality curriculum helps pupils to enjoy their learning. It provides well for the needs of different groups, including those with English as an additional language and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make good progress as a result of effective support programmes. Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The formal procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are satisfactory and staff provide good pastoral support and guidance to pupils. Academic guidance for pupils is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The recently established leadership teams are improving the school's effectiveness by broadening leadership and increasing staff's participation in the process of making the school better. Although good use is made of data to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning, other aspects of the school's self-evaluation lack rigour and it has not ensured all teachers use the agreed approaches. Effective action has been taken to improve performance in the Reception classes, but standards in Years 1 and 2 are not yet high enough. Both the improvement made since the last inspection and the school's capacity to improve further are satisfactory. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards and pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1.
- Improve the quality of the school's self-evaluation in order to provide greater consistency and effectiveness in teaching.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are better than the school judges because, overall, pupils make good progress and their achievement is good. Children in the Reception classes are on track to attain at least the age-related expectations by the time they enter Year 1. This is a noticeable improvement over previous years, when in important areas such as language, literacy and communication and mathematical development, they lagged behind. For the last three years, results in national tests in Year 2 have been significantly below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented unsatisfactory achievement for these pupils. However, assessments show that, due to improved teaching, progress is now satisfactory in Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, pupils have made significantly better progress than pupils nationally and have attained above the national averages in English, mathematics and science in the Year 6 tests. This is a direct result of stronger teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

The school judges this aspect to be good, but inspectors found behaviour, attendance and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be satisfactory rather than good and hence judge personal development and well-being to be satisfactory, overall. Pupils do not have a strong enough awareness of other cultures and their spiritual development is no better than that normally found. Pupils have a good understanding of what they need to eat to be healthy and appreciate and enthusiastically participate in the many different opportunities for exercise the school offers. Pupils from different ethnic backgrounds get on well together and pupils are keen to help and bring about improvements in school and in the local community, for example, by designing a wall in a local park. Many pupils behave well and cooperate

effectively on tasks, but in a few lessons, inappropriate behaviour slows learning and some pupils do not behave as sensibly as they should around school. Attendance has shown improvement in the last year.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching is good overall, in its impact on pupils' achievement and progress during their time at the school. However, its effectiveness is too dependent on the skills and expertise of individual teachers. The strongest teaching is in Key Stage 2. Here, teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and challenge them with sharp questioning and the tasks they provide. Pupils respond well in these lessons and make good progress. There are agreed approaches to teaching, for example, explaining to pupils what they will learn in each lesson, providing work to meet the needs of different groups in a class and giving comments on completed work that should help pupils to understand what they need to do to take the next steps in their learning. These strategies are used effectively by some teachers and aid pupils' learning, but others make superficial use of them and the potential benefits for pupils are not fully realised.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The provision in the Reception classes is vibrant, well planned and organised so that children make a good start to their education. Elsewhere, the curriculum is well planned and good links between subjects bring learning to life. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed a Tudor themed day and the history focus was used in literacy lessons. Appropriate support is provided for different groups and the more able pupils benefit from opportunities such as the 'brain academy' where their computer and problem-solving skills are extended. The good personal, social, health and citizenship programme, enhanced with inputs from the 'crucial crew', helps pupils to make appropriate choices. The good range of clubs enhances provision significantly. The Key Stage 1 curriculum is not as strong as that for the other key stages, but it is improving.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Good relationships between pupils and adults in the school provide a secure base for pupils' learning to develop. There are good arrangements within school and with pre-school settings and the local secondary school to ease the transition between each of the phases of pupils' education. The school effectively tracks pupils' progress and intervenes successfully to support pupils whose learning slows. The guidance given to help pupils take the next steps in their learning is not as effective as it could be because of the inconsistent use of targets. The required systems to safeguard pupils

are in place but communication of information between staff about vulnerable pupils is not always effective. These weaknesses mean that the overall effectiveness of care, support and guidance is satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides an appropriate focus on inclusion and raising standards and achievement, and is supported well by leadership teams that are becoming increasingly effective. Data is analysed well to provide insights into the effectiveness of teachers, as well as to identify where pupils are achieving well and where more work needs to be done. However, the impact of some of the appropriate initiatives to improve teaching and learning has been reduced because they have not been consistently implemented. The monitoring of teaching has not identified these weaknesses and, consequently, they have not been addressed. Governors, who are becoming increasingly involved in evaluating the performance of the school, have a sound understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and provide a reasonable level of challenge to its leaders.

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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?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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?	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	2
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

We enjoyed our visit to your school. We judged your school to be satisfactory and improving. We think that you try hard in lessons and that you do well in the Year 6 tests.

You all get on well together most of the time and lots of you help to make the school a pleasant place to be through your work in the 'job squad'. Many of you said how much you like your lessons because of the interesting things you do. We know that you really enjoy going to the many different clubs in school and some of you do particularly well in sporting competitions. You are lucky that you come to a school where all the grown-ups care for you and listen to what you have to say. We think the ideas you have had to make your school better, such as improving the playgrounds, are very good.

Your headteacher and all the other grown-ups want you to have the best school possible. They are working hard to make this happen. Teachers and their helpers make your lessons interesting and give a helping hand to those of you who need it.

Although results in the Year 6 tests are very good, the Year 2 test results could be better. You have many good teachers in your school. We want your teachers to make sure that those of you in Key Stage 1, do as well as you can. We think that the managers of the school should check that all teachers teach as well as the best ones.

Your parents are glad you come to this school and are pleased with how well you do. So are we and we are sure you will continue to be very happy there.

My best wishes to you all.