

Ashley Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108685
Local Authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	288155
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Margaret Shepherd

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	464
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Wayne Hayes
Headteacher	Mr Phillip R E Grice
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2002
School address	Temple Park Road South Shields Tyne and Wear NE34 0QA
Telephone number	0191 4564977
Fax number	0191 4564977

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is twice the size of an average primary school. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. There are a small number of pupils who come from several different minority ethnic backgrounds. A small number of pupils are in the early stages of acquiring English. Children enter the Nursery with skills that are generally below average but with a wide range of abilities; a higher proportion than usual have speech and language disabilities. The school includes a small, purpose built assessment centre for pupils who attend from across the local authority.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school. It has outstanding features. Pupils' achievement is good and standards are above average. Children make a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes because there is a very well-organised curriculum and staff respond effectively to individual learning needs. Progress in these classes in communication, language and literacy is particularly good with a strong emphasis on recognising and using different letter sounds. Progress continues to be good in Years 1 and 2. Standards by the end of Year 2 are consistently above average in reading and writing. Although standards in mathematics do not drop below average, they are not consistently as good as reading and writing. Standards at the end of Year 6 in mathematics are above average. In contrast, standards in English have been varied from year to year. The school has put in place good strategies to raise standards in English and standards in the national tests last year rose to above average.

A key strength of the school is its stimulating and innovative curriculum. Together with the high levels of care, support and guidance, this results in outstanding personal development. Parents really appreciate this. A typical comment from parents was, 'Not only are pupils encouraged academically, but also to be 'well rounded'; for example, to have opinions, care for the environment, each other and to take part in after school and other activities.' Pupils' preparation for their future lives is excellent. The organisation of visits to local businesses is a central part of each topic and gives pupils a deep understanding of the world of work. There is an exemplary school council, which contributes significantly to the life of the school. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and relish opportunities to contribute to the school and local community. Their behaviour is excellent. They have a very good understanding of safe and healthy living. Assemblies make an important contribution to their outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher sets a very clear direction for the work of the school and his leadership and management are excellent. He sets a high quality example for the rest of the staff in his detailed knowledge of all the pupils despite the large number in the school. Middle managers are enthusiastic and are very knowledgeable about the school. The recent reallocation of roles puts them in a good position to analyse and use data more effectively to promote consistently high standards over time. The school's performance management systems are well organised and help to promote a focus for key areas of improvement. This results in good teaching and learning throughout the school. Teachers work very well with teaching assistants but their use of interactive whiteboards during lessons is inconsistent. The governance of the school is good. The school has worked effectively to improve the work of the school since the previous inspection. It has a good capacity to succeed in future and provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in mathematics in Years 1 and 2.
- Develop the middle managers' expertise in using and analysing data.
- Make better use of available technology, including interactive whiteboards, in lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The inspection confirms the school's view that achievement is good and standards are above average. Children enter the school with skills that are below average but with a wide range of abilities and a higher proportion of children with speech and language difficulties. They make a good start in Nursery and Reception because teaching and learning are good and there is a very well-balanced curriculum. By the end of Reception, the great majority of children reach the expected levels for their age. Achievement is very good in communication, language and literacy. Children receive good encouragement to talk whilst they are carrying out activities. Very thorough teaching of reading and writing gives them the confidence to recognise and read letter sounds and to write them down.

Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Standards by the end of Year 2 in reading and writing are consistently above average. Standards in mathematics are variable but do not fall below average. In contrast, standards by the end of Year 6 in mathematics are consistently above average. This is due to the careful organisation of teaching pupils in groups of similar ability in the junior classes as well as the very good example set by the mathematics coordinator. Standards in English in Year 6 have been variable over time. The school has worked skilfully to raise standards. They rose in 2006 and current assessments show that Year 6 pupils have sustained these higher standards. The school works hard to provide a curriculum that matches the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, pupils with English as an additional language, gifted and talented pupils, boys and girls all achieve equally well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

This is a major strength of the school and reflects the headteacher's high priority for this aspect of each pupil's development. Pupils from the Nursery to Year 6 have an excellent understanding of the world of work, which they gain from their regular visits to different businesses. They also have an outstanding knowledge of economic characteristics learnt from carrying out their own enterprises. These include doing surveys of favourite biscuits, making and selling them and producing a profit. They also publish a very high quality half-yearly newspaper. Pupils make excellent contributions to the school and local communities. The school council is exemplary; councillors relish their responsibilities. For example, they showed great perception in the analysis of their interviews with the applicants for the post of the new headteacher. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning in lessons, in the many clubs and in the wide range of visits. The Year 6 pupils are very appreciative of their residential visit. They identified a wide range of skills learnt from this experience. Attendance rates are higher than average when unavoidable long-term absences are taken into account. Behaviour is excellent in lessons, in the hall, around the school and in the playgrounds. Pupils have a very clear understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Assemblies make a major contribution to this learning, with pupils showing great sensitivity when they sing or say prayers.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good with some outstanding features. There is a close partnership between teachers and teaching assistants, which is particularly beneficial to the learning of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff manage behaviour very well and this results in a calm and purposeful context for learning. Teachers do not all use the interactive whiteboards consistently well in lessons, which reduces the opportunities for pupils to learn from visual and practical stimuli. In some outstanding lessons, there is a fast pace, very good subject knowledge and encouragement for pupils to take risks when solving problems.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides a rich and varied curriculum that is closely matched to pupils' needs and interests. The organisation of subjects within topics is firmly based on visits to businesses in the community and works extremely well. This results in pupils having a very good understanding of how to use basic skills in practical situations. The school provides carefully structured support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which leads to them achieving well. There is a stimulating programme for gifted and talented pupils, including an after-school club that provides 'Brain Academy' topics and project work such as Durham Cathedral. The use of a specialist to teach physical education through the school works very well. Parents and pupils appreciate the range of interesting clubs available throughout the week.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school sets a very high priority on this aspect of its work. Staff work very closely together to provide high quality care, support and guidance for each pupil in their academic and personal development. The well-established staff know each pupil's circumstances very well and use this knowledge very effectively. Despite the large number of pupils, the staff manage to create a family ethos for learning. Pupils say they are confident to go to any member of staff for support, particularly the headteacher. Safeguarding systems are in place. The school uses the expertise of the staff in the assessment centre well to support systems in the main school. It also works in very productive partnerships with external specialists to promote pupils' well-being. The Nursery staff identify children's needs very effectively whether they have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or are gifted and talented. The school responds speedily in providing additional support where appropriate. Staff provide clear academic guidance for individuals, which results in pupils having a very good understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. The school works in a very close partnership with parents which they fully appreciate.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher is very committed to the school and his leadership and management are outstanding. He sets a very clear direction for the work of the school and communicates this very effectively to staff, pupils, parents and the community.

The middle managers have a diverse range of expertise and are moving well into their new roles. They are in a good position to use and analyse data more efficiently. The school has good quality performance management systems that provide a clear focus for staff development. For example, middle managers have all attended training at the National College to prepare themselves for their new roles. The headteacher and senior staff have good self-evaluation skills. Governors have a good knowledge of the daily working of the school and the local community. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and has a good capacity for future improvement. It provides good value for money.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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?	1
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	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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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	1
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

21 June 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashley Primary School, Tyne and Wear, NE34 0QA

Thank you for being so welcoming to me when I came to your school. You were all so friendly and helpful in answering my questions.

I was extremely impressed with how much you understand about the world of work through all your interesting visits. Your topic work is excellent and you really get to learn about many different subjects in your themes; such as, the farm or tropical rainforests. I could see that you thoroughly enjoy your learning whether it is using ratios in mathematics, writing an interesting end to a story or investigating bubbles in the water tray. You share each other's experiences very well in your assemblies. I am sure you cannot wait to have your turn in going on your residential trip in Year 6 to find out how to canoe and to climb up rocks. Your behaviour is outstanding and you have a very good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Your school council is one of the best I have ever talked to; they do so much to improve your school. I know that Year 6 pupils will be sad to say goodbye to your headteacher. Lots of you told me how much you enjoy talking to him. I agree with you. I think that he leads your teachers and all the other staff really well. He has lots of very interesting ideas and makes your school an exciting place to learn.

You do really well in reading and writing and I have asked some teachers to help you to do even better in mathematics. Nearly all of you have got interactive whiteboards in your classrooms. I have asked your teachers to help you use them more at different times in your lessons. I have also asked some of your teachers to work more often with the information your school collects about how well you are learning as you move through the school. I am sure that you will all do your part to make your school an even better place.

Best wishes

Maggi Shepherd

Additional Inspector