



# Ashcombe Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 109096  
**Local Authority** North Somerset  
**Inspection number** 288280  
**Inspection dates** 15–16 November 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Martin Kerly

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Earlham Grove
<b>School category</b>	Community		Weston-super-Mare
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11		BS23 3JW
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01934 620141
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	389	<b>Fax number</b>	01934 612 453
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	David Dennis
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Peter Turner
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 January 2003		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average. Numbers have risen significantly in the last few years. There are now two parallel classes in each of the seven year groups, whereas previously some classes had a mix of pupils from more than one age group. A Children's Centre opened on the site in September 2006 and houses the school's two Reception classes. This new building is some 100 metres from the other six separate buildings which form the rest of the school. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds but a substantial minority are from families experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. Almost all pupils are White British. The proportion who qualify for free school meals is above the national average.

## 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 some outstanding features and provides well for all pupils. The excellent leadership by the headteacher, who is supported well by the leadership team, ensures an effective balance is maintained between pupils' personal development and their academic achievement. Many pupils enter school with abilities below those found nationally but by the end of Year 6 standards are comfortably in line with the national average. Pupils achieve well and their personal development and well-being are good. They are very thoughtful towards one another and keen to support those in need.

Teaching is good overall and some is excellent. Provision in Reception is outstanding with the staff team making very good use of the new purpose-built excellent accommodation. The good teaching in the rest of the school is strengthened by the very good models provided by the senior staff, and the effective joint planning by teachers in the parallel classes. Teachers use an imaginative and wide range of ways to assess their pupils' learning and involve the pupils themselves whenever possible. However, recent new developments in assessment are not being introduced systematically because there is no clear plan to ensure a consistent approach. The curriculum is good but limitations in the accommodation, for example the small hall and considerable distance between buildings, impose some constraints and help lead to the significant differences in provision between Reception and Year 1. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. All pupils are very well cared for and the support for the most vulnerable pupils and those with complex difficulties by the whole staff team is excellent. An exception to this is at lunchtime. School lunches are not popular and look unappetising. The hall is overcrowded and noisy at lunchtime and the rapid movement of pupils through a relatively small dining hall inhibits any positive contribution to pupils' personal development.

Leadership and management are good. The school has particularly comprehensive and systematic procedures for checking on the pupils' progress and on all aspects of its performance. This information is used well to plan changes to the way things are done and how and where to allocate additional support for specific pupils. As a result the school has a clear picture of its strengths and areas for development and is well placed to improve further. It has made particularly good progress in addressing the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection, including pupils' attendance. Attendance has improved markedly and is now above the national average. Almost all parents tell inspectors they value the work of the staff team and confirm their children like school. One parent wrote, 'I cannot praise highly enough the dedication and commitment of the headteacher and his team.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Develop and implement a plan to ensure the new developments in assessment are introduced systematically and applied consistently across the school.
- Ensure there are effective links to promote a smooth progression in provision from Reception to Year 1.

- Improve the lunchtime arrangements in the hall, including the quality of meals, to promote a positive social experience for all pupils.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Those with complex problems make very good progress. Children's attainment on entry is below national expectations, particularly in language skills and, for some, in personal, social and emotional development. Children in Reception are now progressing exceptionally well because, as one parent wrote, 'Not only are they enjoying amazing facilities, but most importantly they are surrounded by motivated and caring professionals.' Progress in Reception in previous years has been good but nevertheless by the end of the Reception Year many children were still below the nationally expected goals, especially in language and literacy skills.

Achievement in Years 1 to 6 has improved and is now good. Standards in writing, a previous weakness, have improved as a result of whole school initiatives. By the end of Year 2 standards are now in line with the national average for reading, writing and mathematics. Standards by the end of Year 6 in English, mathematics and science are also in line with the national average, which still indicates good progress for these pupils as, when they were at the end of their Year 2, they were still performing below the national average. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are well placed to attain their challenging targets, maintaining the upward trend in standards.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They co-operate very well and recognise what is right and wrong. Older pupils take on substantial responsibilities, for example as peer mediators at lunchtimes. One seven year old told inspectors, 'I can't wait to be in Year 6 because then I can be a mediator and help people.' Pupils in Year 5 reflected thoughtfully following participation in a ceremony at the local war memorial. Their cultural development is satisfactory. They have a limited awareness of other cultures and are not as well prepared as they might be to grow up in Britain's diverse society. Behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy school very much. Pupils learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol but do not always eat healthily. Many do not enjoy school meals and some do not bring very healthy food in their lunchboxes. Others report concerns about the crowded and rushed arrangements for eating lunch. The school council are proud of their achievements, especially of raising lots of money for the excellent school adventure playground and for national charities. Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of learning but their research skills are less developed because of infrequent access to the small school library.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning in Reception are now outstanding. Teachers provide an excellent balance between adult led activities and those initiated by the children. Their planning and assessment of children's learning across all aspects of the curriculum are exceptional. Teaching and learning in Years 1 to 6 are good with some excellent features. The 'building learning power' initiative is successfully helping pupils take more control of their learning. Year group teams plan closely together, ensuring a consistent approach within the year, but there are some significant changes in learning styles between Reception and Year 1. Teaching assistants are used well to support learning of specific groups, particularly those with learning difficulties and other problems. Single year-group classes are helping to promote effective learning with most activities carefully matched to pupils' prior attainment. Regular assessments ensure teachers have a good knowledge of what their pupils need to learn next. However, the increasingly wide variety of new assessment methods and ways of setting pupils short-term targets, are not consistently applied or agreed, and this leads to some uncertainties by teachers and pupils.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

Whilst the curriculum is good overall, the excellent qualities in the Reception Year are not fully maintained in subsequent years, partly as a result of the constraints imposed by scattered buildings and limited internal space. The hall is too small for the whole school to meet together and is used intensively throughout the day for many different activities. Teachers are developing imaginative approaches to link different aspects of the curriculum and they use information and communication technology (ICT) well across other subjects. The curriculum for personal and social development is strong and adapted to meet the needs of specific pupils. Lots of visits are arranged, for example to the local museum, and pupils enjoy special events such as Victorian week. There is a range of club activities after school but relatively few pupils are involved in them.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

All pupils are well cared for. The extra support for vulnerable pupils is excellent as a result of the good work of the trained learning mentors and other key staff. Pupils in need of extra emotional support are closely monitored to help them over difficult times with a weekly TLC checklist reviewed. A particular strength is bereavement counselling. Good links with outside agencies safeguard the most vulnerable pupils, including those with complex needs. The school makes good use of performance data to track pupils' progress. However there is some inconsistent use of assessment and

marking between classes. The governors and staff are implementing statutory procedures designed to ensure pupils' safety and protection. Pupils report feeling safe and free from harassment.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's high expectations of pupils and staff have led to pupils' good achievement and personal development. His dedication and commitment are excellent models for colleagues; a view endorsed by all parents. He has built an effective leadership team. Very clear guidance and policies enable a united staff team to work well together, overcoming the physical barriers associated with operating across seven separate buildings. Exceptions to this are the absence of a planned approach to new ways of assessing pupils and strategies to promote links between Year 1 and Reception now they are 100 metres apart. There are very well developed and particularly clear procedures for school and subject leaders to monitor all aspects of the school. Governors regularly receive reports from staff and this helps keep them well informed about the school. They are led by a well informed chair who has an exceptionally good grasp of his role. Individual pupil performance data are carefully collated. There is a heavy reliance on the headteacher for the collation and analysis of these data and only limited use of ICT in the process makes it somewhat labour intensive.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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	1
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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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**

A team of inspectors visited your school recently to find out how well the school is doing. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to a number of you in lessons, looking at some of your work and meeting groups of you, including members of your school council. Thank you for making us so welcome.

I am pleased to say that for lots of reasons we found that Ashcombe Primary School is a good school. Here are some of the most important things we found to be good:

- You work well in lessons and make good progress.
- The arrangements for the children in the Reception classes are excellent.
- You behave well and are very thoughtful about one another.
- Your teachers make sure you have interesting things to do in lessons that are not too easy or too difficult.
- The staff take good care of you all and give lots of extra support to those of you who have problems or when you are worried.
- The headteacher works extremely hard to make the school a good place; he is supported well by other members of staff who work well as a team.

To improve the school still further we have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to work together on three things:

- Make sure that all the teachers know about some of the new ways being used to assess your progress.
- Find ways of helping teachers of Reception classes to work more closely with those in Year 1.
- Improve the arrangements at lunchtime in the dining hall, including the quality of school meals.

We hope you all continue to enjoy your time in the school.