



# Ash Grove Primary School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 111017  
**Local Authority** Cheshire  
**Inspection number** 288827  
**Inspection dates** 16–17 October 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Jane Hughes

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>	Belgrave Road
<b>School category</b>	Community		Macclesfield
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Cheshire SK11 7TF
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01625 500604
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	121	<b>Fax number</b>	01625 503512
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Ms Jenny Cronin
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Rita Kumar
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 January 2003		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Ash Grove is a small school that serves an area with significant disadvantage. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. There is morning and afternoon provision, currently for 13 nursery age children within the new Foundation Stage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are eligible for free school meals is far higher than average. Movement of pupils into and out of the school is high. A Children's Centre is to open on the site in 2007. The new headteacher was appointed in September 2005 following an 18 month period with an acting headteacher.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

Ash Grove suffered an extended period of staffing instability and change during 2004 and 2005. This turbulence precluded continuity of vision and a clear focus on improvement. The new headteacher and chair of governors took up their roles in autumn 2005. Staffing is more stable now, although there is still some staff absence. The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Although over-generous in grading some aspects of its work, the school's overall evaluation of its effectiveness is in line with inspection findings. The new headteacher is committed to raising standards and providing quality care and support for pupils. She, along with middle managers and governors, provides satisfactory leadership and management. Newly introduced procedures, particularly those related to the tracking of pupils' progress are too recent for their impact to be either fully embedded or measured.

Standards are exceptionally low but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Children enter the school with very low skills. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage, particularly in terms of their personal, social and emotional development. This is because adults in the Foundation Stage have high expectations of children and maintain a necessarily strong teaching focus on developing their social skills. Even so, by the time they enter Year 1, few children reach the national expectations for their age. At first glance, standards fluctuate considerably from year to year. This is because of differences between year groups within the context of a small school. Although English and mathematics standards are very low by the end of Year 2 and Year 6, pupils who join the school in the Foundation Stage and remain until Year 6, and who attend well, make satisfactory progress. Nonetheless, the high frequency of pupils moving in and out of the school depresses the overall picture of standards at the end of Year 6. Last year, for example, a quarter of pupils in Year 6 had arrived in school in Year 5. These pupils have insufficient time in the school to make up lost ground from their very low level of skills. The more able pupils are not always set sufficiently challenging work in lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not given precise enough targets from which to measure their success. This limits their achievement.

Pupils' personal development is good because the school places a strong focus on this aspect of pupils' education. Pupils show good attitudes to school. They and their parents say that they enjoy school and would even like to come to school at the weekend. Behaviour is good and pupils understand teachers' expectations. Attendance is below average. Some parents are too distracted by pressing personal problems to make sure they bring their children to school regularly. These erratic attendance patterns have an impact on pupils' achievement and the standards they reach. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It is consistently good in the Foundation Stage as reflected in the children's good achievement. The curriculum is enriched by an evolving programme of extra-curricular activities much enjoyed by pupils. The new library is celebrated by all and pupils appreciate this new facility.

Care for pupils and their well-being are given a high priority. The school prides itself on its warm and welcoming ethos. Adults pay close attention to developing pupils' self-esteem and this helps them to become effective learners and increasingly

purposeful members of society. More rigorous tracking and target-setting is helping pupils to see more clearly how to improve their work.

Parents are impressed with the many improvements to the school's physical appearance and the facilities and opportunities on offer. They feel their opinions are sought and acted upon. They are glad they chose this school for their children because it cares well for them and they feel included in what happens in school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. In view of the recent stabilisation of leadership, coupled with strong external partnerships, the school shows a sound capacity to improve and provides satisfactory value for money.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Raise the proportion of good or better teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure that the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given suitably precise and challenging targets to accelerate their progress.
- Improve pupils' attendance.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Although standards are very low throughout the school, pupils' achievement is now satisfactory. Standards reflect the exceptionally low skill levels pupils have when they start school, both when they enter the Foundation Stage and at other times of the school year. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress, particularly in terms of their personal, social and emotional development because teaching is consistently good. Even so, by the time they enter Year 1, standards are still very low. Many younger children are often absent. Few children reach the national expectations for children of their age. The most recent teacher assessments for Year 2 pupils show very low standards and reflect the fact that nearly half the group consisted of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. One quarter of the Year 6 pupils joined the school during the year of their Key Stage 2 tests in 2006. Staff changes and insufficient focus on pupils' ongoing progress affected this year group's results. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress but are not given precise enough targets to help them measure their improvement. More able pupils are not stretched enough and this is reflected in the relatively small numbers of pupils attaining the higher levels.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils say that their school is improving and talk of it with pride. Increasingly, they dash to the doors each day, eager to come in. One little girl in Reception made certain that her dad would bring her straight back to school after her dental appointment.

Pupils feel that their views are taken into account and know they have helped to improve some areas such as better playtime equipment. Pupils relish the opportunity to take responsibility around school. They are very aware of the reasons to eat and live healthily and chat happily about this to supportive kitchen and lunchtime staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school works hard with agencies and specialised teams to improve pupils' attendance. Nevertheless, some parents do not see the value of regular attendance or the part it plays in improving their children's achievement and ensuring their future well-being. As a result, some pupils attend very sporadically and miss important work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Within a satisfactory picture, pockets of good teaching are spread equally throughout Years 1 to 6. This contributes to pupils' satisfactory progress overall. In most lessons, teachers offer clear explanations so pupils know exactly what is expected of them. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully. They use the skills of teaching assistants well to support pupils who need additional support, both within lessons and in small groups outside the classroom. This ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar rates of progress to other pupils, although the targets they work towards are too broad to accelerate their progress further. Not enough attention is given to ensuring that faster learners are effectively challenged. The pace of their learning is sometimes held back because work given is too easy. Consistently good teaching in the Foundation Stage enables the youngest children to achieve well, particularly in terms of their social skills.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The curriculum is broadening and meets statutory requirements. More challenging activities are beginning to motivate pupils and to improve their learning. Pupils say lessons are more interesting. Some say they enjoy the harder work. Links between subjects are improving. For example, in literacy, pupils in Years 5 and 6 studied travel guides for Greece. The teacher linked well the focus on persuasive writing with historical knowledge about key buildings and areas of interest. A good range of clubs and extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum and brings new experiences to pupils. The headteacher is successfully raising pupils' and parents' understanding of other cultures.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' welfare is given close attention. Appropriate procedures are in place to safeguard pupils and to ensure their health, safety and well-being. There is a welcoming attitude

to visitors in school. Good links with outside agencies cater for the many different needs of the pupils. The school is establishing an effective team dedicated to meeting pupils' significant social and emotional needs. Parents appreciate this level of support for their children. They feel this contributes to pupils' personal development and helps to raise their achievement. There is prompt support for individual concerns or very vulnerable pupils from mentoring and support staff. Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there are many adults to talk to if they are upset. Tracking and individual target systems are in their early stages and have not yet had enough impact on pupils' progress. Increasingly, teachers are providing more helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve their work but it has yet to have full effect. It is because of the weaknesses in pupils' academic guidance that this aspect is satisfactory rather than good.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

The school lost momentum and rigour in the absence of a permanent headteacher. The new headteacher is committed to providing a successful school for pupils and the local community. There is evidence of a developing team approach and of a staff determined to raise standards. The headteacher and governors know that much work remains to be done. Effective support from the local authority has helped the school to identify its main strengths and priorities. The school is now in a position to build on some of the many new initiatives the headteacher has put in place over the last year. For example, staff are tracking pupils' progress more consistently and they have a clearer picture of pupils' current skills and how to move them on to attain higher standards. The governing body is a mix of experienced and very new members. Governors have a sound understanding of the school's priorities. Although clearly supportive of the headteacher, they do not yet offer sufficient challenge to the school.

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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>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
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

<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	4
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

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

<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>	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**

Thank you for your warm welcome during my recent visit to your school. I enjoyed all our chats and seeing you working hard and playing so well together.

Your school has changed quite a lot recently. You told me about some of the most important changes and how much you look forward to school. Your school is giving you a satisfactory standard of education and, with a lot of hard work from everyone, including yourselves, this could get even better, so carry on trying your very best.

There are things to be proud of in your school. Everyone is very friendly. They know how to behave properly and get on well together, which is a very useful skill for the future. You enjoy your lessons and like your teachers and other adults. You and your parents say that all the adults take good care of you and help you with any problems. I agree with you.

One of the reasons for my visit was to see what your school can do to improve. I have asked your headteacher and all the adults to help you do better in English and mathematics (literacy and numeracy), so you reach higher standards in your work and make faster progress. I have also asked your teachers to check that all of you are given just the right levels of work so that you can move on better with your learning. You can be a great help to your school with the next area to improve. Too many of you do not come to school every day and so you miss lots of important work. Try to remind everyone at home that you need to come to school every single day. I'm sure you will remember that because it's so important!

Carry on working hard and enjoying school.