



Ash Croft Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112771
Local Authority City of Derby
Inspection number 289404
Inspection dates 16–17 January 2007
Reporting inspector Michael Miller

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Deep Dale Lane
School category	Community		Sinfin, Sinfin
Age range of pupils	5–11		Derby, Derbyshire DE24 3HF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01332 764 160
Number on roll (school)	168	Fax number	
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Haydn Davis
		Headteacher	Mr Trevor Vaughan
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
5–11	16–17 January 2007	289404

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ash Croft Primary School is a smaller than average school in the Sinfin area of Derby, close to its southern border. It is an area of social deprivation. Pupils enter the school, in the Reception Year, with overall below average levels of attainment. An increasing proportion have no pre-school or nursery experience. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average, as is the percentage learning English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls, particularly in Years 1 and 3, where two thirds are boys. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is broadly average. An average percentage of pupils have special educational needs. However, the proportion with a statement of special educational need is low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ash Croft Primary School is a good school. It uses its resources effectively and provides good value for money. It has made good improvement since its last inspection. This is because it is particularly effective in enabling its pupils to make good progress. Self-evaluation and the capacity to improve are good.

Most children enter the Foundation Stage with below average attainment in relation to the early learning goals. There are particular weaknesses in their social, language and creative development. However, pupils receive good support and, although standards are still below average by Year 2, pupils make secure progress and by Year 3 are starting to achieve well. The school enables pupils to build effectively on their skills and learning, and by Year 6 to attain average standards. Pupils are prepared well for their next stage of education. The literacy and numeracy standards reached by Year 6 provide a firm foundation for pupils' future economic well-being. However, the school knows it still has work to do in raising standards of boys' literacy and communication skills, particularly in writing and reading. Nevertheless, standards seen during the inspection confirm the school's positive track record, its resourcefulness, and the fact that the pupils achieve well.

A major factor in the school's success is its promotion of the pupils' personal development. The good quality of display around the school is appreciated by pupils and significantly promotes their self-esteem. Pupils are proud of their school and feel they have an effective voice in its life and work. They were keen to tell inspectors about their promotion of healthy lifestyles, the pastoral support received from teachers, and the racial harmony which exists within the school. They feel safe and say the school's friendly atmosphere helps them to learn. Pupils are open in approach and clearly value what the school has to offer. The guidance and academic support they receive is good. The school is successful in the way it cares about pupils and makes them feel valued. Pupils know they get good support and help when they need it.

The school promotes good quality learning through its curriculum. It has considered how effective links between subjects, and year groups, can be developed to make learning more meaningful to the pupils. The good quality of the teaching underpins such planning. The school has made good progress in developing assessment as a tool for raising achievement. However, questioning techniques to challenge pupils and involve them in assessing their own learning, whilst good overall, are not always applied consistently by all teachers.

The headteacher and his senior team demonstrate effective leadership, and the school is managed well. Together with the support of other staff and governors, he has worked hard to create the right conditions within which pupils can prosper. The school is keen to promote home-school links in support of learning and to work in partnership with parents to help raise standards, particularly in the early years. It is an inclusive school, where pupils from different backgrounds feel their cultures and traditions are understood. As one parent wrote, 'Children are given a valued and important role in contributing to the school's success.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Help children to raise their attainment on entry into the Reception class, by building on the school's project to promote this with their parents, and to develop further that partnership with parents in support of pupils' learning.
- Improve further pupils' communication and language skills, particularly boys' writing and reading work.
- Ensure that the good practice in the use of questioning by teachers, and explaining what pupils are to learn in lessons, is applied more consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are average overall but achievement is good. This is to be seen in the school's latest national test results in English, mathematics and science for Year 6 pupils, and was confirmed during the inspection. Although standards have been falling slightly over recent years, this reflects declining standards of attainment on entry. It also reflects the increasing percentage of bi-lingual pupils and those with English as an additional language requiring additional support. Children get a good start in Reception, and progress by all groups of pupils improves steadily through to Year 6. The value the school adds in terms of pupils' achievement by Year 6 places it in the top 25 per cent of schools nationally. The school caters particularly well for pupils with learning difficulties, and they make good progress. Teaching assistants are used effectively to provide additional support for such pupils and to aid achievement. The school is successful in raising standards because of its firm focus on enabling pupils to fulfil their individual potential.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is promoted well, but rates are lowered by family holidays and extended visits and are therefore only satisfactory. Working relationships and behaviour are good. Behaviour has improved since the introduction of features such as playground leaders. Pupils are well aware of how to keep themselves safe in school and in the community. They greatly enjoy all aspects of school life because of the wealth of opportunities to take responsibility from Reception onwards. Pupils make an excellent contribution to school life. Members of the school council take their responsibilities seriously and form an influential group. Pupils are enthusiastic fundraisers and show empathy with less fortunate people. There is good encouragement for pupils to lead healthy lifestyles, and participation in physical activities is a particularly strong feature. By Year 6, pupils have well developed teamwork skills and are personable, articulate and self-confident.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching, learning and assessment are good. Teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' abilities to plan interesting and enjoyable activities that are pitched at a suitably challenging level. Lessons are prepared and organised well so no time is wasted. Varied activities help to hold pupils' interest. They are confident learners because staff value their contributions. Teaching assistants are skilled and well briefed and provide effective individual support. Praise and encouragement are given regularly. Pupils value their learning, and constructive criticism of their work helps them to improve. In the best teaching, skilful questioning ensures that all pupils are able to take part in answering. Pupils are attentive and very keen to answer questions. However, the sharing of what is to be learnt, and the review of this later in lessons, are inconsistent. As a result, pupils are not always involved in assessing how well they have done.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well and is continually under review to ensure it meets pupils' needs. Teachers work together well to coordinate the subjects and good professional discussion promotes curriculum development and innovation. Staff and governors work cooperatively to monitor what is taught, and this aids the planning process. There is good support for literacy and numeracy in order to develop pupils' key life skills. The additional needs of pupils entering Reception are understood well by the school. It is currently working closely with parents to help prepare better their children for this important stage of education. The promotion of curriculum and learning links between home and school is at the forefront of school improvement planning. For a school of its size, there is a very good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Pupils benefit well from these, particularly in their personal, social and health development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Staff help children settle quickly into Reception. Older pupils play an important part in helping younger ones. Pupils know whom to go to if they have a problem. Arrangements to safeguard pupils meet requirements. The school has a good system for checking the progress that pupils make and quickly identifies those who need extra help. Additional support, including that from outside agencies, makes an important contribution to pupils' good progress. The school recognises the need to work in partnership with parents so they are better placed to help their children learn. Academic guidance is good. Marking of pupils' work helps them to improve. From Reception onwards, all have targets to work towards, and older

pupils know what levels they are at in English and mathematics and what they need to do to move up to the next level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's leaders are dedicated to ensuring that the pupils get a fair deal. They understand the importance of enabling pupils to become involved fully in lessons and learning. The headteacher is committed to school improvement. He takes very seriously the implementation of initiatives to support the pupils' personal and academic development. Good leadership is ensuring the school is increasingly successful. Leaders have high expectations of themselves, other staff and the pupils. Targets are realistic with a suitable level of challenge. Planning is clear and well considered. Monitoring and evaluation by senior and subject leaders are good. Consequently, the school knows well what it needs to do to improve further. Communication within the school is a strength and delegation of responsibility, and accountability, is accepted readily by staff. The good management of the school is supported well by the governing body, which fulfils its statutory duties. Governors are developing good links with the school and visit regularly. Together, the school's leaders and managers ensure that the pupils receive a good education.

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	1
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.

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

18 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Ash Croft Primary School, Deep Dale Lane, Sinfen, Derby, Derbyshire, DE24 3HF.

We would like to thank you all for welcoming us into your school and for the way in which you helped us with the inspection. Ash Croft Primary is a good school. You are rightly proud of it because it helps you to achieve well and make good progress.

These are the things we found are best about your school.

- Your teachers, and other staff, help you to prepare well for your future lives.
- We were impressed by your friendliness and the active part you play in school life.
- You behave well, pay attention in class and enjoy being involved in learning.
- You work well together because you understand each other's cultures and traditions.
- Your teachers look after you well and guide you well in your work.
- Your teachers are enthusiastic and determined to help you to improve.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Your school has a very special project for helping younger children, and their parents, before they start in Reception. This is beginning to help you learn better when you start school. We encourage the school and your parents to work together even more closely, to help you achieve more in your early years at school.
- To help you achieve even better in your literacy work, we have asked the school to help you improve your skills and learning in your language and communication work.
- We are encouraging your teachers to develop the ways they ask you questions in lessons, so you understand better what you are learning.

You, too, can help by continuing to work hard and support each other. As one of you said about the school, 'Love it the most!'

With all best wishes,

Michael Miller

Lead Inspector