

Ashburton Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 113184 |
| Local Authority | Devon |
| Inspection number | 289539 |
| Inspection date | 2 May 2007 |
| Reporting inspector | Patricia Davies |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School | 210 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Rebecca Harriott |
| Headteacher | Rosaleen Cook |
| Date of previous school inspection | 2 July 2001 |
| School address | Whistley Hill Ashburton Newton Abbot TQ13 7DW |
| Telephone number | 01364 652343 |
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

Ashburton is a little smaller than average. Year groups vary in size and there is some movement of pupils in and out of all year groups. Most pupils are from White British families. A very few come from other ethnic backgrounds and a very small minority of these pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties is above average and particularly so in some year groups. The number of pupils with statements of educational need is also above average. Attainment on entry to Reception has been below the level expected and, in some years, well below average. It has risen recently and is now broadly average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ashburton is a good school. Parents express considerable satisfaction with what it offers their children. Their written comments pay tribute to a lively, happy and creative school. Its hard work has secured pupils' good academic achievement, personal development and well-being. Care, guidance and support are also good. Pupils' views are highly valued and they take on influential responsibilities with considerable maturity and good sense.

This is a forward-looking school that does not stand still. This quality is powerfully illustrated in its endeavours to make learning stimulating and relevant to pupils' needs and interests. As a result, there is an excellent curriculum. Natural links are drawn between subjects, while at the same time preserving the discrete teaching of subject skills where necessary. There is a close focus on creative activities, such as art and design, and on sporting activities too. All these factors provide excitement and challenge and a rich foundation for teaching. As a result, the school has seen a considerable increase in pupils' motivation, particularly in their attitudes to writing. Personal, social and health education is strong so that pupils have a highly developed understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle.

Good provision in Reception ensures these children progress well. Standards in the most recent groups are above expectations by the end of this first year. Good progress is maintained throughout the school and this has enabled pupils to reach broadly average standards. In some cases, these standards have represented significantly above average, even exceptionally high, rates of progress in English and mathematics by Year 6, but not consistently so. This is because, while teaching and learning are good, pupils are not always challenged as rigorously as they should be.

Leadership and management are good. The school takes a close look at itself. Consequently, it has a clear understanding of its effectiveness and takes action promptly where the need for improvement is recognised. Governors are both supportive and challenging and take decisive steps to ensure the best possible provision.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teaching is consistently rigorous in challenging pupils so that they always make the best possible progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and represent good achievement given that attainment on entry to Reception has only very recently risen. Yearly variations in attainment are influenced by differing proportions of pupils with learning difficulties within each year group; also by the impact of pupils leaving and joining the school. Test results at Year 2 have been steadily rising and to the extent that results in writing were above average in 2006.

Pupils make good progress at and across each key stage. This is true for all ability groups, including those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language. The relatively slower progress at Years 3 and 4, noted at the time of the school's last inspection, has been resolved, although some more generalised issues with challenge for pupils remain. National test results at Year 6 over the last three years point to some significant and

exceptionally high rates of progress in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, these substantial levels of achievement are not yet consistent. The school has taken action to ensure that more pupils reach the higher Level 5 in science and assessments show a large increase in the proportion predicted to reach that level in this year's tests.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils like their school. They speak of its friendliness and how much they enjoy a wide range of subjects. The topic-based curriculum is popular. Pupils' enjoyment of art and physical education is to be seen in the sensitivity and individuality of their artwork and their keenness to get off to their sporting activities! These features begin to illustrate pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 offer thoughtful reflections on how to avoid hurting the feelings of others, especially those who are 'different' in some way. Moments of quiet prayer are respectfully observed. Most pupils behave extremely well, although the behaviour of a very few is sometimes challenging. Attendance is good.

Pupils' highly developed understanding of how to keep healthy is readily shown in their considered and sensible approach. For example, some popular snacks are known to have questionable nutritious credentials, and so are eaten in moderation; the need for more shade in the playground is seen as an important area for improvement. Indeed, it is clear that pupils are well used to sharing their views on a wide range of issues. Their contribution to school life is considerable, from the deliberations of school council members, to small everyday classroom responsibilities. Within their playtime responsibilities, pupils take steps to pre-empt any poor behaviour, showing a mature understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe from poor behaviour and bullying. On a wider front, pupils made a significant contribution to the local town plan and also consider wider ecological issues. Their maturity, good sense and confidence, together with their strong academic achievement, give them many skills and qualities for later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are industrious, well organised and managed. This is especially important where pupils have the choice of a range of equally exciting activities. Pupils know exactly what they have to do and are keen to get on. While teaching is well focused, it is also relaxed and often lively. As a result, without fail pupils listen and concentrate, readily respond to questions and work well with each other. Even when, very occasionally, pupils become a little noisy, it is because they are thoroughly enjoying the activity.

Teaching assistants are an integral part of classroom activities, working closely with class teachers, individual pupils and small groups. Careful planning ensures that work is always suitably matched to different levels of ability. When teachers' questions push pupils that one step further, answers are extremely mature and thoughtful. Not all lessons have this same degree of rigour, however. Sometimes activities are not sufficiently stimulating and challenging, especially when they are aimed at consolidating learning. On other occasions, pupils receive general help instead of sharply focused attention aimed at extending ideas. Pupils' work is marked regularly, although feedback sometimes misses the opportunity to provide greater detail about how pupils could do even better.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's highly exciting curriculum brings together several subjects in order to give learning a real and stimulating context. Vibrant displays pay testament to its diversity and quality. Much time has been devoted to planning so that the curriculum is both innovative and flexible, but also closely focused on building secure academic skills. Therefore, some subjects, such as mathematics, are also taught discretely. This new approach has been hugely successful in English, where the focus on writing successfully promotes reading too. Girls and boys are highly motivated to write and to research information independently. The emphasis on practical and imaginative tasks has given the school the chance to extend investigational activities in science, particularly to advance the achievement of the more able in this subject. There is a wide and diverse range of clubs, from African drumming and tag rugby to drama and environmental science. The school's work in the arts and physical education has been recognised in national awards.

Those with learning difficulties are well provided for through 'booster' and small group work in and out of lessons. Where these pupils have very particular needs, the school has very successfully modified the curriculum to accommodate them. Good provision in Reception is marked by an effective balance of directed and independent activities. This is a bright and stimulating environment, with lively activities that develop a joy of learning right from the start.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Many parents endorse the school's dedicated care of its pupils, not least for those pupils with learning difficulties and behavioural needs. Although a very small minority of parents express some concern about behaviour, discussion with pupils indicates that the school has clear strategies to resolve any difficulties, which pupils understand and feel to be successful. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure. Outside agencies are readily involved for vulnerable pupils or those with learning difficulties.

Pupils are set suitably challenging National Curriculum levels as targets that they are expected to reach. Their progress is very carefully monitored so that any falling behind can be given extra support. Pupils are closely involved in negotiating learning targets with staff and checking their progress. They are not so clear about when these targets are replaced once they have been reached.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Taking its cue from the very positive, forward-looking leadership of the headteacher, the school takes a close and honest look at its performance and constantly challenges itself to do better. The responsibility for monitoring and improving the school's effectiveness is shared equally and enthusiastically across all senior and subject leaders. Monitoring activities are wide-ranging and include discussions with pupils as well the close analysis of assessment and test data. The good knowledge gained from these checks has enabled the school to create a curriculum that interests and excites its pupils and staff, and to successfully tackle academic weaknesses, such

as those in writing. In most instances, once the school has identified an area in need of improvement, it acts swiftly. These qualities spell out the school's good capacity for future and further improvement. Senior leaders monitor and support teaching carefully, and are aware that there are relative weaknesses needing further attention.

The governing body is well organised. It takes decisive action to ensure the school is well staffed, and is quick to challenge when necessary. Financial management is secure, with a good eye on harvesting resources for future needs.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| <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

| | |
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| 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

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| 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 | 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 | 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 | 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? | 1 |
| 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

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| 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

02 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Ashburton Primary School, Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 7DW

Thank you very much for welcoming me to your school. I enjoyed being with you all and this letter is to tell you about some of the things I found out while I was with you.

Most importantly, Ashburton is a good school and most of your parents think so too. It is well led and all the staff work extremely hard to make sure that your activities are as interesting and exciting as they can possibly be, so that you really want to learn. I was really pleased to hear from some of you how much you enjoy your topic work and a wide range of subjects.

Here are some other important things about your school:

- Your behaviour is good and you feel your school is a friendly place to be.
- You all do well because teaching is good, and sometimes your progress is better than that, but not always.
- You have many important responsibilities in school and your ideas are really valued.
- You have an extremely good understanding of how to keep healthy, and enjoy your sporting activities!
- All the staff take good care of you, and you look after each other too.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better:

- Make sure that lessons are always challenging so that you make the best possible progress you can.

With best wishes for the future.

Patricia Davies Lead inspector