



Anstey First School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117218
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290757
Inspection date 14 November 2006
Reporting inspector Georgina Beasley

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

Type of school	First	Education Centre address	Anstey Buntingford Hertfordshire SG9 0BY
School category	Community	Telephone number	01763 848346
Age range of pupils	4-9	Fax number	01763 849377
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Chair	Mr Wilfred Dimsdale
Number on roll (education Centre)	16	Headteacher	Ms Claire Logan
Appropriate authority	The governing body		
Date of previous education Centre inspection	17 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the education Centre

All pupils who attend this very small village school are from White British or other White European backgrounds. All pupils speak English fluently. A very small proportion is eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is about the same as other schools of a similar size. Attainment on entry to the school is similar overall to national expectations. The headteacher has been in post since September.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the education Centre

Grade: 3

Anstey First School gives pupils a satisfactory education. There has been satisfactory progress overall since the previous inspection, although this has accelerated considerably under the new headteacher's good leadership and clear vision. Consequently, there is a renewed enthusiasm and commitment from staff, parents, governors and pupils to make this a more successful school and there is good capacity to improve. The school works closely with parents, who are already impressed and have confidence that things are getting better. One parent commented, 'The school has a fantastic atmosphere and is very exciting at the moment' describes well the school's increasing drive to make learning more interesting and relevant. On entry visitors are made to feel welcome by the smiles from staff and pupils, and the thoughtful displays of pupils' work. The school's vision 'Learning is at the heart of all we do' is displayed prominently for all to embrace.

Pupils' personal development is good. Their excellent attitudes, impeccable behaviour and very high attendance have been maintained, owing to the very good relationships and strong family atmosphere. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to do well. They are confident to offer ideas and views and like the many opportunities they are given to contribute to school and village life.

Achievement is satisfactory. All pupils make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics from the end of Reception until they leave the school. There are signs that the decline in achievement and standards over the last two years has stopped. The quality of teaching and learning, while satisfactory, is improving and is resulting in good progress and higher standards in some lessons. Teachers use the interactive whiteboard effectively to engage learners. They ask a good range of questions and give pupils time to think things through for themselves. Careful consideration is given to how activities can best support pupils' different abilities, with some success. There is still too much whole class teaching with pupils often doing the same work, especially in writing, and so there is not always enough challenge for the more able pupils. Teachers generally give clear feedback to pupils about what they have learned in lessons. However, pupils are not involved enough in assessing their own work and so are not yet able to identify for themselves how they can make their work better.

Measures to make sure the school is doing as well as it should are ensuring that there is sufficient information to help the school put together a plan to ensure its development. Rigorous checks are resulting in the school's having an accurate picture of how well it is doing. Short-term targets are helping the school move forward quickly but a more detailed plan is not in yet place to ensure that the school's long-term vision for its development is successful.

What the education Centre should do to improve further

- Provide more challenge for the more able pupils, especially in writing.
- Involve pupils more in assessing their work to help them evaluate how well they are doing and know what they need to do to improve.

- Fully establish the more rigorous systems for checking how well the school is doing and use the information to implement a long-term strategic plan for the school's development.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Owing to the very small numbers in each year group, attainment can vary considerably from year to year. Children start school with attainment that is generally typical for schools of a similar size, with a small number of more able pupils and a small number with learning difficulties. Progress is satisfactory and pupils reach the levels they are expected to reach by the end of Reception. Standards are average at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 in English and mathematics. However, achievement, although satisfactory, has declined in the last two years.

Signs of improvement are emerging. There is good achievement in some lessons in reading and mathematics because some work pupils are asked to do when working in groups is designed to meet their different needs. This provides support for those pupils who need it and additional challenge for the more able pupils. Parents are informed about how their children are doing and so are able to help at home. Challenge is not so evident in writing because pupils often do the same work, with higher attainers expected to do more and those with learning difficulties being given more support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils pay excellent attention in lessons, listening to the teachers' and each other's views and contributions sensitively. Playtimes before and during school are always amicable. Pupils new to the school are quickly made to feel welcome and so they settle well into the family atmosphere the pupils help to create.

Good provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures that pupils are developing a good awareness of their own and others' feelings and beliefs. The school has successfully widened opportunities to improve pupils' developing awareness of different cultures. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, for example ensuring that younger pupils are given the help they need to be happy in school. They contribute to the local and wider community through several fund raising efforts, many of which they organise themselves.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching is improving, owing to the headteacher's clear direction and the commitment of all teaching staff to try to ensure that all pupils achieve well. Good

use of discussion and questioning is enabling all pupils to give their views and ideas and so all are confident to ask questions to clarify their learning. Targets for literacy and numeracy are used well to let pupils know what is expected of them in lessons. However, there is inconsistency between classes in the way these are utilised to challenge the more able and to identify what still needs to be learned to reach the next level. Good support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties to enable them to succeed.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has reviewed and reorganised its curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to include more links between subjects and so make learning more purposeful and relevant to their needs. The curriculum for pupils in Years 3 and 4 is currently under review to complete the same task and ensure that it is just as interesting. A good range of visits and visitors enriches the curriculum well and brings learning to life. Personal, social and health education, physical education and science lessons give pupils good opportunity to consider how to stay safe and keep healthy. Since September, there has been an emphasis on pupils taking part in a wide range of sporting activities, enhanced through strong links with the local sports partnership. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and all areas of learning are covered. Nevertheless, opportunities for children to choose to learn outside are still limited. Access to the outdoor area is not easy from the younger pupils' class and working separately in the designated area to facilitate this is not always possible.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school makes sure that pupils are cared for well while in school and government regulations concerning the employment of staff are followed. Health and safety and child protection procedures are fully in place and all staff who were in post last year have completed recent training to ensure that they are well-informed about these areas. All staff provide very good role models and pupils respond accordingly, with excellent manners. Relationships are very good and so pupils are confident to ask for help when they need it.

New assessment systems have been introduced in September and are being used effectively to check how well pupils are learning and whether they are making enough progress. New arrangements in the Foundation Stage are helping the school to monitor exactly how much progress individual children are making in all areas of learning. Teachers' written comments when marking work point out what pupils have learned and whether they have reached their individual targets for literacy and numeracy. Insufficient guidance is given on what pupils need to do to reach their next target.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good leadership of the new headteacher provides clear direction for the work of the school. Strategies put into place to improve how well pupils' work is assessed are starting to result in focused learning. Resources have been sorted out. Leadership of subjects is satisfactory. Staff are enthusiastic and work well as a team to put new initiatives into place. Improvements to the Foundation Stage are satisfactory, although the outdoor area still lacks imagination and is not used as often as it could be to support learning for self-initiated learning activities and imaginative play.

The governing body ensures that it meets its responsibilities soundly and has supported the school well through recent years. It is provided with good information to help ask the school challenging questions about why it is doing what it is. The budget forecast looks adequate for the school's needs but does not yet fully support school improvement planning because clear links between the two have not been identified. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	Education Centre 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?	3
How well does the education Centre work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of the education Centre's self-evaluation	3
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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

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	1
The attendance of learners	1
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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?	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 education Centre require special measures?	No
Does this education Centre require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 November 2006

Dear Children

Anstey First School, Anstey, Buntingford, Hertfordshire, SG9 0BY

Thank you all very much for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently.

I am writing to let you know that the school is doing a satisfactory job but I want to mention a few special things. I was impressed with your excellent behaviour and how you all get along so well. You are all very polite and thoughtful and are growing into responsible young people. Well done. Your excellent attitudes are helping you to learn and your teachers to teach. Consequently, I can see that you are beginning to learn more in lessons, especially in your maths and reading. I have asked your teachers to make sure that the tasks they plan for you to do will help you even more to reach your targets, especially in writing and for those of you who are capable of harder work. I have also asked them to make sure that when they are marking your work or discussing with you how well you have done, that you also talk about how you can get even better. You can help by knowing what your targets are and by remembering to check your work to see whether you are reaching them.

Ms Logan is a good headteacher. She has worked hard with all the adults to make sure that you are doing what you should to achieve even better in your work. I have asked her and all the adults who work in your school to plan how they will make Anstey a more successful school, something I know you all want to happen. I know you will help to do this because the school is one big family where you all work together to make it a happy place to be.

Please have a very special Christmas and enjoy the rest of your time at the school.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Beasley (Lead inspector)