



Ashfield Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117391
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290818
Inspection dates 13–14 September 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Michael Milton

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	School Lane
School category	Voluntary controlled		Bushey, Bushey
Age range of pupils	7–11		Watford, Hertfordshire
			WD23 1SR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0208 9502350
Number on roll (school)	230	Fax number	0208 3860525
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs. Lynn Overstall
		Headteacher	Mrs. Carolyn Dalziel
Date of previous school inspection	30 April 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
7–11	13–14 September 2006	290818

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashfield Junior School has two classes in each year group. Most of its pupils transfer from Merry Hill Infants. Pupils' skills and knowledge on joining the school vary between year groups but are usually above average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with about a quarter of the pupils from a wide variety of minority ethnic groups. There are below average proportions of pupils eligible for free meals or with learning difficulties and disabilities. Ashfield has the Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This good and improving school has the overwhelming support of the parents. As one parent wrote, 'The head and all the teachers seem totally committed to the school and its pupils'. Since the previous inspection, the school went through a difficult period when it was deemed by the local authority to be causing concern. In 2004 a new headteacher, supported by a very able newly appointed deputy headteacher swiftly got to grips with the issues. After a year, it was no longer considered to be in this category. Overall, the school has made good progress since the previous inspection. This is because the leadership has been very effective. Senior staff together with a committed staff team, have successfully focused the school's energies on raising pupils' standards and improving their personal development. This has meant that although standards and progress dipped markedly a few years ago, the school has successfully pulled these up to where they should be. Pupils' standards are now above national averages. They enjoy school and their achievement is good in English, mathematics and science. The school has rightly concentrated on improving standards in these subjects over the last two years, and has now started the process of raising pupils' achievement in other subjects. Different groups of pupils achieve equally well. In the national tests for Year 6 in 2006, pupils' standards in English, mathematics and science were above national averages, and the value the school added to pupils' progress was much greater than that typically expected. In English, pupils read accurately and fluently, and many speak clearly about quite complex ideas. The school is taking good steps to improve pupils' achievement in writing as it is not as good as their achievement in reading. In mathematics, pupils have successfully improved their basic skills to a high standard and are beginning to improve their skills in planning and carrying out mathematical investigations. Pupils have improved their scientific enquiry work in the past year, although a few are not so good at using their scientific knowledge and understanding to explain their findings. Teaching and learning are good and lessons are occasionally excellent. Pupils recognise that teaching has improved because they now enjoy them much more. Lessons are well managed and organised, and the work of the well qualified learning support assistants helps pupils to learn. Some lessons give pupils good opportunities to use their initiative. In the best lessons, pupils have very good opportunities to discuss their learning and they enjoy the challenges that the teaching provides. Some of the short-term targets set for pupils are too complex for them to understand and the quality of marking does not always help pupils to improve their learning as much as they could. Classroom activities provide particularly good opportunities for pupils to practice skills learned in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). A good start has been made in the use of ICT to improve pupils' learning in other subjects so, for example, Year 3 pupils use their ICT skills effectively for historical research. In addition, there are many interesting additional activities including Spanish, that older pupils enjoy. Pupils lead healthy lifestyles. There are high levels of care for pupils' social and emotional needs. The progress of each pupil is carefully tracked towards end-of-year National Curriculum targets, and positive action is taken to help any who are at risk of underachieving. Pupils respond well to the school's provision. They are very well behaved and keen to

learn. Pupils feel safe at school and value the opportunities they have to work collaboratively, to shape the life of the school and develop good relationships. The school has a good capacity for further improvement because it knows itself well and it is accurate in what it needs to do to improve. Its planning for future improvement is good. It checks rigorously that aspects of its work, such as teaching and the progress of individual pupils, are as good as they should be.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all short-term target setting and marking help pupils to improve their learning. - Raise pupils' achievement in all subjects to mirror the improvement in pupils' levels in English, mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics and science and their standards are above national averages. Pupils from different groups, including those from minority ethnic groups achieve well and pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do particularly well. This good achievement follows a few years when pupils did not achieve well enough and is because their provision is now very well managed. Teachers and learning support assistants provide very good support, which is linked closely to the pupils' particular learning needs. Since the headteacher was appointed two years ago, the school has rightly focused on raising standards in English, mathematics and science and has now started to improve the average standards in other subjects such as history and geography. Over the last year, the school has improved the standards of pupils' ICT skills as it now has better computers and programs, together with more effective ways of teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding because pupils, throughout the school, are helped to develop their self-confidence and independence in many ways. The school is also giving them more opportunities to make decisions about their learning. Pupils respect adults and their friends. They take classroom responsibilities seriously and those with special tasks, such as the school councillors, are proud of their achievements. Year 6 pupils carried out the school's questionnaire survey of pupils' views, and analysed the findings as part of their mathematics lessons. Pupils' are keen to come to school and have very good attitudes to learning. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is well supported by the very good programme of personal, social and health education so that pupils understand how to stay safe and maintain healthy life styles. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of their responsibilities to the wider community, and raise funds for a wide range of charities at home and abroad. The school makes sure that all pupils develop very

positive attitudes towards learning, establish good relationships with others, and have effective basic skills so that they are well prepared to become valuable citizens.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because teachers establish warm, encouraging relationships with pupils, manage their classes effectively, and make good use of learning support assistants. They have high expectations of pupils' achievement and clearly state what pupils are to learn. Pupils appreciate that teachers work hard to help them understand new ideas, and they enjoy the challenges their work provides. A weakness in some teaching is that the short-term targets for pupils are too complex and marking does not help pupils to understand how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school's broad and varied curriculum is relevant to the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils' with learning difficulties and disabilities are exceptionally well served and so make rapid gains in relation to their targets. There is a strong, successful emphasis on teaching the basic skills of English and mathematics but these skills are not always used consistently to support learning in other subjects. The school has recently reviewed its plans for each subject and this provides a secure basis for establishing further links between different subjects. Good steps have been taken to increase pupils' enjoyment of the curriculum. Pupils' learning opportunities are enriched in art, sports and design and technology through the productive links with nearby secondary schools. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of additional physical education activities, well-attended lunchtime and after-school clubs, and a good range of visits and visitors.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for pupils' welfare is a considerable strength and makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development and achievement. Rigorous child protection procedures and risk assessments are implemented effectively, and ensure that pupils always learn in a safe environment. Vulnerable pupils are well cared for and those who have learning difficulties are identified rapidly and receive a very high quality of support. Good use is made of outside agencies to help pupils achieve as well as possible. The school has successfully improved its use of assessment. Individual end-of-year National Curriculum targets are set for English, mathematics and science and are used to help pupils achieve well. Pupils' progress towards these challenging targets is carefully checked. Some teachers use these targets very effectively to help pupils to understand how they can improve, but this is not done consistently in all classes.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher's very good leadership, with the good support of the deputy headteacher, has been a key factor in the school's rapid improvement. They have provided the vision of what the school should be like and a good range of clear strategies to achieve the necessary improvements. They lead by example. The effective governing body acts as a critical friend and monitors the work of the school. Subject leaders have made important improvements to provision and pupils' standards in their subjects in a relatively short time. The work they have done is good but their actions have not yet had enough time to fully raise standards in their subjects. The school's evaluations of its performance are accurate. These evaluations, including surveys of the views of both pupils and parents, inform the accurate selection of priorities for improvement in the effective school improvement plan. The implementation of the plan has resulted in higher standards of teaching and improved achievement by all groups of pupils within 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	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 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	2
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	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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?	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

Dear Children Peter Lewis and I really enjoyed our visit to your school and particularly liked your lovely singing in assembly! It was good to meet you and the staff. Thank you for welcoming us and being so polite and helpful. We learnt a lot about the school from you. It was good to hear about some of the ways the school has improved and how much the school council has achieved. You do really well with your English, mathematics and science work because the teaching is good and challenges you to learn as much as possible. Also, you are exceptionally well behaved and very keen to learn. The teachers keep a close check on how much progress you make, and give you just the right help if you have any difficulties. Mrs Dalziel and the staff look after you really well, and are trying to make your work more fun. You have lots of opportunities to join clubs at lunchtime and after school, and you visit some interesting places. Mrs Dalziel and the staff know what needs to be done to make your school even better. The main things are to: - make sure that all of the targets shown on flip charts in classrooms and all of teachers' marking of your work helps you to understand how to improve your work - help you to achieve as well in subjects like geography and history as you already do in English, mathematics and science; and - give you more opportunities to use your own ideas and to make decisions in your work, as you have already started doing for science experiments. You can help with these improvements by continuing to behave well and work hard, by thinking carefully about how you can improve your work and by taking notice of teachers' comments in your books. With best wishes for your new school year. Mike Milton (Lead Inspector)