

Ashby-de-la-Zouch Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120190
Local Authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	291662
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2007
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Eydman
Headteacher	Liz Powell
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2002
School address	Burton Road Ashby-de-la-Zouch LE65 2LL
Telephone number	01530 412243
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves an area of mixed housing. Very few pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, and almost all speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. Children's attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage (Reception) is average. A new headteacher was appointed in November 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils, whose achievement is satisfactory. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage, where they make good progress. Provision in the Foundation Stage is good, with a particularly strong focus on developing pupils' literacy skills. From then on, progress is satisfactory and pupils leave at the end of Year 6 with standards that are average. Teaching is satisfactory. Standards of discipline are consistently high in lessons, so pupils behave very well and have good attitudes to their work. With this exception, there are no aspects of teaching that are consistent from lesson to lesson. The biggest variation is in the way work is chosen to be suitably demanding for all pupils. In some cases this is very well planned, but in others all pupils end up doing the same task, regardless of their ability, and this slows their progress.

Pupils' good personal development and well-being are considerable strengths, brought about by the good curriculum. Pupils like coming to school because they get on so well with one another. The careful attention to personal and social education, together with the wide range of trips and extra activities, ensure pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong, good manners and an enjoyment of learning. Pastoral care is a particularly strong aspect of the good care, guidance and support that pupils receive. Procedures for child protection are rigorously followed. Pupils receive good guidance on how to improve their work. Good communication with parents ensures that they know how they can play a good part in their child's education.

The school has improved at a steady rate since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. Managers are good at using data to identify the main areas in need of improvement, and then taking actions to improve the curriculum or guidance for pupils. However, the checks that are made on teaching focus on strengths without paying sufficient attention to any weaknesses, so teachers are not clear about how their teaching can be improved. The result is a school where academic achievement is not up to the same good standard as pupils' personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress made by pupils by ensuring they always receive work that is suitably challenging.
- Ensure all teachers receive clear advice on how their teaching can be improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils leave the school with average standards. They are satisfactorily prepared for the next stage of their education although their personal development is stronger than their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Their achievement is satisfactory, regardless of their background or ability, but a little better in English than it is in mathematics. Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Stage. They join with standards that are expected for their age and make good progress, so by the time they join Year 1, their standards are above average with a particular strength in their communication, language and literacy skills. This raising of standards is a relatively recent improvement that is slowly but surely starting to filter up through the school. Standards in Year 2, for example are a little above average now, but standards in Year 6 are still average. The standards in Year 6 reflect the satisfactory progress that pupils have made since they joined the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils clearly enjoy their education and are keen to come to school, so attendance is above average. Behaviour is particularly good and pupils are mature for their age. They engage easily with adults, always demonstrating good manners. Their respect for others shows itself in the way they listen to others' views and opinions. Pupils show remarkable initiative. Together they will organise and manage fund raising events from start to finish. At an individual level, Year 3 pupils organised their own tasks when they had finished the work set for them.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. By Year 2, they understand that 'there are more important things than money'. Pupils show they care about the plight of others in moving letters written to the armed forces in Iraq. They have a good understanding of their role in the community, and take on a lot of responsibility, such as helping in the canteen with lunches. The school council has a strong voice and demonstrates pupils' good understanding of how to lead a safe and healthy lifestyle, for example through actions taken to improve the quality of meals. They are a bit upset that not all parents are supporting their work by providing healthy packed lunches!

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Children's good progress in the Foundation Stage is down to the good teaching they receive. The activities used to stimulate the pupils are particularly creative. One task, where children had to question each other about the animals depicted on the hats they were wearing, demonstrated how the teachers make learning fun, while maintaining a strong emphasis on developing language skills. The same level of enjoyment is seen in other classes across the school when teachers use practical or problem solving approaches, such as working out how long a journey takes if you have to cross time zones.

Standards of discipline are consistently high across the school, but this consistency is the exception rather than the rule as there is considerable variation in other aspects. This is most notable in the way that work is set for different groups within a class. Sometimes, all pupils receive work that is matched to their ability. It is just difficult enough to make them think hard. However, on other occasions, the same task is given, regardless of their ability, so some find it too easy while others find it too hard, and this limits their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school works hard to provide a curriculum that goes beyond that which is often seen. Much of the pupils' good personal development is a result of the successful programme of personal, social and health education. The school has won awards for its work on developing pupils' understanding of different cultures. Strong links have been forged with France, for example, and French is taught in Years 3 to 6. The school makes good use of its collaboration with lots of other organisations to enrich the curriculum. The school works closely with the local church but also with places of worship of different faiths from further afield. Pupils and parents value the wide range of extra sporting activities that play such an important part in developing pupils' good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy.

Pupils are given good opportunities to use their literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum but fewer to use their numeracy skills. Nevertheless, where pupils are identified as starting to fall behind in mathematics, changes to the curriculum are quickly put in place. Often this will involve special 'booster groups', where pupils are given intensive support to help them catch up.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides a warm, inviting and supportive atmosphere where pupils feel safe and know staff will deal with any concerns they have. Child protection procedures are particularly robust and detailed. Risk assessments carried out on trips and visits are thorough, but the same attention is not paid to activities carried out in school, such as science experiments.

Vulnerable pupils and pupils who are at risk of underachievement are identified well. Successful actions are taken to ensure that their education does not suffer because of their home circumstances, often making very good use of links with external agencies. Many parents comment on how quickly pupils settle in to school life. New pupils are helped by being given a buddy to support them, while 'friendship stops' and 'mediators' in the playground ensure that they remain happy throughout their time at school.

Academic support and guidance are now good. Recent changes have improved the way that the school tracks pupils' progress as they move through the years. Most pupils are very clear about their targets and good marking ensures that they know what they have to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The school's managers have shown that they have the skills necessary to move the school forward. All staff are very clear about what the school needs to improve, and are committed to bringing about changes. Some major improvements have been made since the previous inspection, most notably in the Foundation Stage which is now a strength of the school after being a significant weakness.

Managers get an accurate picture of the school's overall performance because they make good use of the data available to them. Signs of underachievement are quickly spotted and acted upon. Actions are successful, so the school ensures that no group of pupils underachieves. However, the actions tend to be based on improving the curriculum or academic guidance, rather than identifying the underlying reasons that brought about the indicators of underachievement in the first place. The weakness lies in the way that teaching is evaluated. Lessons are described for what they provide, rather than evaluated for how well the pupils have learned. The descriptions focus on what worked rather than what could be improved, so teachers do not get a clear idea of how to develop their teaching, and managers get a slightly generous impression of the quality of provision. Governors have changed the way they work over the past year or so and now play a much stronger role in checking the quality of education provided.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<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

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 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

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	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	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?	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.

Annex A

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	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome when we visited your school. Your teachers and parents can be proud of the way you behaved and your very good manners. The grown-up way you talked to us made our job much easier. You told us that you like coming to school and we can see why. You are getting a satisfactory education, but there are lots of good bits. You settle in quickly because the other pupils are so friendly and keep an eye out for anyone who is not happy. Your teachers care about you very much. They want you to enjoy your time at school, so they try to make lessons fun and make sure you have lots of extra trips and clubs to take part in. The teachers also keep a close check on how well you are doing in your subjects, so they can spot anyone who is not keeping up and make sure they catch up again.

In some lessons you learn a lot, but then in others you do not learn as much as we would expect. This balances out over the year so, overall, you learn as much as we would usually expect you to during your time at school. It would be better if you could learn a lot every lesson. So we have asked the people who run the school to check the lessons to find out which things could be better. We have given them some ideas about what could be improved. The main one is making sure that the work you are given is always just hard enough to really make you think. The people who run the school know what to do to make it better. They have made some very good changes for the youngest ones, who make a great start to their school life.

Thank you once again for being so kind to us. We really did enjoy ourselves in your school.

With all best wishes for your future,