

Ashill VC Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121026
Local Authority	NORFOLK
Inspection number	291959
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Marina Gough

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	116
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Furniss
Headteacher	Mr Andrew Haynes
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002
School address	The Oaks Ashill Thetford Norfolk IP25 7AP
Telephone number	01760 440403
Fax number	01760 440403

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	19–20 June 2007
Inspection number	291959

© Crown copyright 2007

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The school is set in the rural village of Ashill and pupils are drawn from the local area. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Whilst the overall percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties is low, the percentage of those with statements of special educational need is high. Levels of mobility are broadly average but can have a significant impact when there is only a small number of pupils in any given year group. The school is working towards 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 is a good school that gives good value for money, and that has a good capacity for further improvement. Good progress has been made since the last inspection although the rate of progress has been inconsistent because of staffing difficulties which have recently been successfully resolved.

The attainment of pupils when they join the school in the Reception class is different year on year. Through the careful tracking of pupils' progress and attainment the school is able to demonstrate that pupils make good progress from their very different starting points, so that by the time they leave school at the age of eleven, they have achieved well. The attainment of the current group of Year 6 pupils is broadly in line with the national average. The school has identified writing as an area for whole-school development. This is an appropriate target given the difficulties that some pupils of all ages have in writing creatively or, in the case of older and more able pupils, producing pieces of written work that are long enough.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use assessment information very well to match work closely to the needs of individual pupils. Activities are interesting and resources are used particularly well to enhance learning. Pupils' personal development and well being are good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and respond enthusiastically to new learning. They are highly motivated and well behaved. They know how to stay healthy, fit and safe, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school makes good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and the recent week long visit of a North American Indian has proved to be an excellent learning experience for pupils of all ages.

The curriculum has evolved well over recent years and is good in all key stages. Time is used to maximum advantage, and good links are made between subjects so that the pupils have a meaningful context for their learning. The school provides an extensive range of lunchtime and after school clubs which the pupils really appreciate. Visits to places of interest and the input of visitors to the school contribute much to pupils' learning. The school has a strong family ethos and pupils are treated with care and respect. Staff and governors are vigilant about matters of health and safety and provide good levels of care, support and guidance.

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher successfully balances his two day a week teaching commitment with his management responsibilities, and sets a clear and firm lead for staff. His monitoring is effective in bringing about improvements to teaching and learning, but the monitoring of teaching and learning by subject leaders is an area that is currently underdeveloped. Governance is good. Governors successfully and conscientiously carry out their duties. The school has a good appreciation of its relative strengths and weaknesses, and the school improvement plan is a good working document that shows how the next development steps are to be achieved.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise standards in writing.
- Extend the monitoring role of subject leaders.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The pupils' attainment when they join the Reception class varies year on year. The attainment of the current group is average. Pupils make good progress in their first year in school. As they move through Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils continue to achieve well and standards in English, mathematics and science are often above the national average by the time pupils leave school at the age of eleven. Over the last couple of years standards have been more in line with the national average at the end of Key Stage 2, mainly because the year groups have been very small and have contained a higher than average percentage of pupils who have learning difficulties. The standards of the current Year 6 group are broadly average.

Standards in writing in both key stages are a little lower than standards in other areas. Whilst pupils are willing and able writers, their writing sometimes lacks imagination, and older and abler pupils sometimes do not produce sufficiently extended pieces.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils of all ages enjoy coming to school and attendance is well above the national average. Behaviour is good and occasional incidents of bullying and misbehaviour are quickly and effectively dealt with. Pupils of all ages are exceptionally polite to one another and to adults and they have a mature understanding of the impact of their actions on the well-being and happiness of others. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community. The school council provides a strong pupil voice and takes its duties seriously. Pupils of all ages speak highly of the school, their teachers and the headteacher, and comment positively on how friendly and kind pupils are to one another.

The pupils' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils show high levels of respect and tolerance, and a real interest in the lives of people from different cultures. The annual 'cultural week' is an excellent way of giving pupils insight into different cultures, traditions and customs and is very popular. Pupils know the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and are well informed about how to keep themselves safe. They have good levels of self-confidence, and are well prepared for each subsequent stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Throughout the school teachers do much to make the pupils' learning interesting and exciting. Teachers give clear explanations so the pupils know what is expected of them, and set appropriately challenging tasks that stretch the highest attainers. Good use is made of questions to probe the pupils' understanding and to extend their learning. Resources are used very well to illustrate key teaching points and to capture the pupils' attention. Pupils of all ages respond very well and are keen and active participants in group and class activities.

Teachers make very good use of ongoing assessments to track and monitor the pupils' progress and attainment as they move through the school. Pupils who are experiencing difficulties with their learning are quickly identified so that additional support can be provided.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. In the Reception class, and throughout Key Stage 1, the curriculum has been very well planned so that activities are closely linked to a central theme. The school has firm plans in place to extend this thematic model through Key Stage 2. In all classes the available teaching time is used to excellent effect, and the three long sessions during the morning maximise pupils' learning potential.

The curriculum is effectively enhanced by a wide range of lunchtime and after school clubs which are well attended and very popular. Regular visits to places of interest enhance pupils' learning, as does the input of visiting experts.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides good levels of care, support and guidance. Statutory requirements in respect of checking the suitability of staff and other adults who have regular contact with the pupils are fully met. Good child protection procedures are in place, and the school liaises well with relevant external agencies to promote pupils' well-being and academic progress. Transition arrangements for pupils starting and leaving the school are good enabling pupils to be confident about the next stages of their education. The school is very effective in identifying vulnerable pupils and those who need a boost with their learning. The team of teaching assistants provides very good additional support for these pupils and the many intervention strategies that the school uses are having a positive impact on the standards pupils attain and the progress they make.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides a strong steer to the school's work, and has an excellent overview of the achievement and standards attained by individual pupils across the school. His management of the recent staffing difficulties has been very effective and as a result, staff morale continues to be high and there is a strong and evident sense of team work within the school.

The leadership of individual subjects is sensibly and fairly shared amongst the small staff team. Subject leaders have a good knowledge of their areas of responsibility and a clear picture of what they need to do next to improve provision. Their monitoring role however is under-developed and the school has identified this as an area for development.

The governors fulfil their statutory duties well. Good links have been established between individual governors and subject leaders, and the curriculum committee especially has a good overview of what is going on in the school.

The staff, headteacher and governors have a good and realistic appreciation view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school. The school improvement plan states clearly the next targets for development and the school is well placed to implement its plans and to achieve its objectives.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	-----------------------

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	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	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.

Annex A

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

20 June 2007

Dear pupils,

Inspection of Ashill Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Ashill, IP25 7AP

As you know, I visited Ashill a short time ago to inspect your school. Thank you for making me feel so welcome. I was pleased to see that you behave very well, and that you enjoy coming to school. I agree with you that pupils are friendly and kind to one another, and you told me that there is very little bullying, and that on the rare occasions it happens, your teachers deal with it quickly. I was very impressed by how polite you are to one another and to the staff. Your teachers work hard to make your lessons interesting and exciting and you are keen to learn and to do your best. You do well in lessons because you listen well and are willing to take part in all activities.

You told me that you like many things about the school including the wide range of lunchtime and after school activities that are provided. I know that those of you who took part in the residential visit really enjoyed yourselves and are looking forward to the next one. I am pleased with the way in which the headteacher and staff try to encourage you to be healthy, and thought that the fruit pemmican that you all made looked lovely.

By the time you leave school at the age of eleven, most of you are working at the level expected for your age in English, mathematics and science. You make good progress but could do even better with your writing. Whilst many of you can write short pieces well, you sometimes find it difficult to write longer pieces and some of your writing is not as imaginative as it could be.

The headteacher and governors lead the school well and know what they need to do next to make it even better. Your headteacher has a good idea of what is going on in each class, and I have asked him to make sure that teachers get more opportunity to visit each other's classes so that they too can see how pupils learn across the school.

I hope you all have a lovely summer holiday.

Best wishes,

Marina Gough

Additional Inspector