

# Ashton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	121957
<b>Local Authority</b>	Northamptonshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	292276
<b>Inspection date</b>	9 May 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Marion Thompson

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	26
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Russell Hardman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Blight
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 February 2003
<b>School address</b>	Road Hill Ashton Northampton NN7 2JH
<b>Telephone number</b>	01604 863189
<b>Fax number</b>	01604 863189

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Ashton Church of England Primary is a very small village school. It is organised into two classes, each containing pupils from several year groups. As year groups are very small, the level of children's skills on entry to the Reception Year varies widely from year to year, but is below average overall. Pupils currently in the Reception Year had levels of skills around those expected when they began school. There is a high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties in some year groups. A significant number of pupils of all ages join or leave the school at times other than the usual. The socio-economic circumstances of the families who live in the vicinity of the school are above average. The headteacher was appointed in September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ashton Primary is a good school where pupils achieve well academically and in the development of their personal skills. The school's purposeful and caring ethos ensures that pupils enjoy their work. As one parent commented, 'There is never any problem getting my children to school. On the contrary, it's getting them away at the end of the day that's the problem'.

The 'family' atmosphere of this small school, where staff and pupils know each other well, is highly valued by the pupils. It is a significant component of the good quality of care, guidance and support the school provides. Pupils, especially those who are vulnerable, are cared for very well by staff and pupils. Pupils' good personal development ensures they have considerable understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They make a good contribution to the school and local community, for example by taking part in school productions, and are well prepared for the next stage in their education. They enjoy the many opportunities provided by the school's good and recently improved curriculum, singling out for particular praise the after school activities and the opportunity to develop a garden. Pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development reflects the Christian ethos of the school.

By the end of Year 6, standards are broadly average, representing good achievement. This is an improvement from the previous year when a significant minority of pupils did not achieve as well as they should because of staffing and other difficulties. A better planned curriculum, good and improving teaching and closer tracking of pupils' progress are contributing to current progress, especially for pupils of middle and higher ability. Pupils in Year 3 and a small minority of pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. These are the pupils whose learning was most disrupted by the staffing difficulties and they still have considerable ground to make up. Occasionally the work set does not provide them with the right level of challenge and support. In addition, pupils are not always clear about what their targets are and what steps they need to take to reach them. Children in the Reception Year make good progress because of good provision.

Good leadership and management are key components of the school's success. The headteacher provides vigorous leadership which has led to recent improvements. He is supported by an effective staff team. The school has a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses. Governors provide good support for the school, but do not yet have enough understanding to provide a sufficient level of challenge.

The school is held in high regard by the local community. The parents' questionnaires returned during the inspection were unanimous in their support for the school, and their appreciation of the contribution of the headteacher. One parent wrote, 'I believe the philosophy and practice of the school are everything that a parent could ask for. The school's size allows for a pastoral care and a family atmosphere that are quite unique. The school has improved visibly over the last two years.'

### What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of a small minority of pupils with learning difficulties and pupils in Year 3 by ensuring work always matches their needs.
- Ensure pupils are clear about what their targets are and the steps they need to take to reach them.
- Provide governors with training so they can challenge the school effectively.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils achieve well and standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average by the time pupils leave school. Children in the current Reception Year make good progress, acquiring skills above those expected for their age, especially in mathematical, personal and language development. This is a result of well organised, challenging provision.

Because of the small size of year groups, standards vary throughout the school. Middle ability and more able pupils make consistently good progress, in part because of well planned opportunities to develop their skills through independent learning. Pupils in Year 3, where standards are below average, and a minority of pupils with learning difficulties, make satisfactory progress. Over the previous academic year, the school experienced some disruption, which resulted in a significant minority of children, particularly those with learning difficulties, making less progress than expected. The school is addressing this vigorously, but there is still more catching up to do.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' good behaviour supports their good progress. They become confident learners, well placed to move on to secondary school. They have a good awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. For example, the youngest children know that the fruit they eat at playtime is good for them. Pupils feel very secure in the 'family' atmosphere promoted by the school, and incidences of bullying are rare. They work and play safely. Pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is good. However, pupils have too little knowledge and experience of the range of faiths and cultures in Britain. Their social skills are very good. Pupils who experience emotional or behavioural difficulties are treated with great understanding by their peers and thrive within the nurturing atmosphere of the school. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance and genuine interest in their work. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example by running events such as a tea party to raise money for charity. However, they have too few opportunities to contribute to formal decision making and to understand how they can influence events in society.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Effective use is made of the subject expertise of the four teachers who share the two classes to make lessons lively and enjoyable. Relationships with pupils are close; ensuring pupils are well motivated. Teachers manage challenging behaviour well on the few occasions when it occurs. Lessons are better planned to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils' ages and abilities by using information from recently introduced pupil tracking. Very good use is made of information and communication technology to encourage independent research, especially by pupils of middle and higher ability, and to set homework for older pupils. Occasionally, work is not well matched to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and the pace of learning is slow. A minority of pupils are not sufficiently clear about what their targets are and what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The wide range of experiences the school provides meets the needs of most pupils well. Children in the Reception Year are provided with a balanced curriculum which helps them to develop their independence. Specific activities are now provided to improve the learning of pupils with learning difficulties. This is beginning to improve their achievement, but there is further to go. Occasionally they do not receive the support they need to help them make rapid progress. The recently reviewed curriculum is imaginatively planned, and includes good opportunities for exciting educational visits. Extended writing and numeracy skills are developed well, leading to improved standards. Pupils appreciate the efforts the school has made to provide a good range of activities in and out of school time in response to their requests, especially in sports. Productive partnerships with other schools have provided exciting events like the much enjoyed 'drum day'.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Good systems are in place to ensure pupils' health and safety. The quality of care is outstanding and much appreciated by parents and pupils. Adults in school know pupils well and the high quality of interactions ensures that pupils feel safe and happy. When they are troubled, or join the school part-way through their primary education, they receive sensitive support, ensuring they settle in quickly and make good progress, academically and socially. The school has introduced a good system to track pupils' progress and to encourage pupils to work hard by setting them targets for improvement. This is beginning to raise standards for most pupils. However, it is not yet operating consistently and a small minority of pupils, especially those with learning difficulties, do not have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Good leadership and management successfully promote pupils' good personal and academic development. The headteacher provides a clear sense of direction for the school, supported well by staff. Planning for improvement is good and is based on accurate and honest monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Pupils' achievement has improved substantially over the past year as a result of closer tracking of pupils' progress, better teaching and an improved curriculum. Governance is satisfactory. Governors provide a good level of support for the school. However, they do not have a clear enough understanding of some aspects of the school's work to present the school with enough challenge. The school has made good progress since the last inspection and is well placed to improve further.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	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

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

10 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashton Church of England Primary School, Northampton, Northamptonshire NN7 2JH

As you know your school was inspected recently. I very much enjoyed meeting with some of you and hearing your views. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire so I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report. You will not be surprised to find that Ashton is a good and improving school. You behave well and work hard. You enjoy coming to school and play safely. You take good care of each other, especially when you think someone is having problems, and you make new pupils feel very welcome. You and your parents like the 'family' atmosphere of the school. I was pleased to see how many of you enjoy healthy food and try to stay fit by taking part in lots of games. It was also encouraging that a lot of you take on responsibilities, like organising charity events.

Teaching is good; teachers plan interesting lessons and adults in school take good care of you. They keep a good track of how well you are doing so they can provide help when you fall behind. You go to them for help when you have problems. They plan a lot of exciting trips and extra activities for you. All of this helps you to make good progress and standards have risen. You have a good headteacher, who knows what needs to be done to improve.

I have asked your teachers to help those of you who find learning difficult to make faster progress, by making sure the work is right for you. I have also asked them to make sure you always know what your targets are and what to do to improve your work. I have asked governors to have some training so they can help the school a bit more. You can help too by concentrating on your targets and doing your best to achieve them.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Marion Thompson Lead inspector