



Ash Grove Junior and Infant School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 130858
Local Authority Wakefield
Inspection number 293645
Inspection dates 13–14 December 2006
Reporting inspector Jim Griffin

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Ash Grove
School category	Community		South Elmsall, Pontefract
Age range of pupils	3–11		West Yorkshire WF9 2TF
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01977 723385
Number on roll (school)	298	Fax number	01977 723386
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Jane Hirst
		Headteacher	Mrs J Davis
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–11	13–14 December 2006	293645

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school is situated in an area with significant pockets of social and economic deprivation. Around one sixth of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is broadly average. Almost all children are of White British heritage. A few are of a Mixed White and Black Caribbean background. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average overall and higher in infant classes than in later year groups. The school has had its Investors in People status renewed and it has Healthy School and Basic Skills Quality Mark awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with good features. It provides good care for its pupils and their personal development is good. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The quality of the school's self-evaluation is satisfactory, although it has been over-optimistic in judging the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership and management. It provides satisfactory value for money. It now is well placed to improve further as the leadership capacity has been increased to build on the many good features already part of its management.

Pupils learn in a calm, supportive, encouraging environment centred on good relationships between adults and pupils. Most pupils are confident and courteous to each other and when talking to adults. They have good attitudes to work and behave well. A small minority with social and emotional difficulties are well supported. The introduction of a nationally recognised programme is making a good contribution to developing pupils' moral and social skills. Pupils know about the importance of healthy eating, exercise and staying safe to make them fit and happy. Attendance, while improving, is slightly below average. Pupils, irrespective of circumstances or background, are well cared for, based on all being well known and treated as individuals. Parents are positive about what the school provides and report that staff are very approachable and helpful when difficulties arise. A number of parents speak positively about how their children's happiness and self-confidence have grown markedly at school.

Children start in Nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels, especially in communication, language and social skills. They make good progress in the Foundation Stage, due to a good curriculum and effective teaching that involves children in stimulating activities and promotes good learning. In other classes, there is too much variation in the quality of teaching and learning. Although there is a sizeable amount of good teaching, it is not enough to enable pupils in Years 1 to 6 to make more than satisfactory progress overall. Pupils are not always clear on what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson and not enough is planned to challenge the more able pupils. Additional support for the less able learners is good in English, but there is not enough extra help provided for them in mathematics.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The school runs calmly and smoothly. Leaders have the trust and confidence of the staff. The budget is carefully managed. The leadership is good at developing pupils' personal qualities and caring for all pupils. The school has a well developed system to track pupils' progress. This work has not been linked clearly enough to achieving good progress for pupils, as this has not been an explicit, shared priority. Senior staff draw conclusions from the tracking information, but individual teachers are not involved enough in this work. As a result, they have too little ownership or accountability in relation to their pupils' progress. This contributes significantly to the variability in progress between classes and year groups. Governance is satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make staff more accountable for enabling pupils to reach challenging targets and improving their progress in all classes.
- Provide more challenge for higher-attaining pupils.
- In mathematics, provide more support for the less able learners so that they achieve as well as they can.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Children enter Nursery with knowledge and skills that are low in most areas of learning and very low in communication, language and social skills. They achieve well in the Foundation Stage, especially in the gains made in their personal, social and emotional development. By the time they leave Reception most are working towards the national goals expected of this age but standards are significantly lower in English than in other subjects. In Years 1 and 2 pupils make satisfactory progress, although standards are well below the national average in reading and writing and below the national average in mathematics by the end of Year 2. Standards at the end of Year 2 have declined in recent years, reflecting the growing proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make satisfactory overall progress. By the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average. Progress is best in English, with the less able pupils benefiting from significant additional support. Progress is weakest in mathematics, where additional support for the less able pupils is limited and the level of planned challenge for the more able pupils is not consistently high enough. The school broadly meets its appropriately challenging targets at the expected level in English and mathematics but misses its higher-level targets by a significant margin, especially in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Most pupils have good attitudes to learning and enjoy coming to school. They have good relationships with their teachers and say, 'The teachers help us with our work.' Attendance has improved since the previous inspection, but remains slightly below average as a minority of parents persist in taking their children on holiday in term time. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good; their spiritual development is satisfactory. Pupils are developing a good awareness of the need to consider the well-being of others, as shown, for example, in the way older pupils act as peer mediators for others who have little anxieties or difficulties in school. Mediators take their role seriously and are positive about how well it works in most cases. Pupils gain a good awareness of their own and other people's religions and cultures through stories, art and music. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school community by taking on responsibilities and voicing their views through the school council, for

example. They also make a positive contribution to the immediate and wider community by participating in local events and raising money for different charities. Pupils have a good awareness of the need to eat healthily and take regular exercise and are pleased with the school council's part in getting extra play equipment to keep them active at break times.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with significant pockets of good practice. However, because of inconsistencies, pupils' progress is not uniform year by year. There are some key strengths in teaching found in many lessons. These include good quality questioning, thoughtful consideration of pupils' different learning styles and interesting activities to make learning fun. Teaching assistants are used well to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially in English. There are high expectations of learners' behaviour and close attention is given to developing pupils' social skills, confidence and self-esteem. This contributes significantly to pupils' good personal development and learning takes place in a positive, supportive atmosphere.

There are some important areas for improvement to raise pupils' learning in a sizeable minority of lessons, especially in mathematics, where pupils' progress is less consistent than in English. In these lessons, higher-attaining pupils are not given enough planned, challenging work to enable them to achieve as well as they are capable. Other key features that lack consistency include the pace in lessons, some of which are too slow. The learning outcomes are not routinely shared with pupils and so learners' expectations are not clear enough. The use of information from assessment, while good in English, is satisfactory overall. While there is much good marking of pupils' work, this is not yet of a consistently good quality.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides an effective curriculum that strikes a good balance between the provision of basic skills and more creative and imaginative work. The school modifies the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils. Specialist staff visit the school to teach music and junior pupils take lessons in French that are greatly enjoyed. The school makes good use of 'Enrichment weeks' that give pupils a wider appreciation of other cultures and healthy lifestyles. There is a good range of out-of-school activities, including a thriving Breakfast Club. Residential and local visits are an additional dimension that is highly valued by pupils. Pupils are active participants in the school and wider community through links with the local church, organising school events, fundraising for charities and involvement in dance and music festivals. The school

provides a good curriculum for pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities in English but not enough use is made of additional support materials in mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The caring atmosphere in the school ensures that pupils feel safe and confident that there is someone they can talk to if they are troubled or upset. Pupils spoke highly of the role peer mediators play in helping everyone stay friends. Pupils feel valued and special because they are rewarded for their achievements. A learning mentor works closely with individual pupils, which has been successful in raising their self-esteem. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are thorough and child protection procedures are clear. The school responds particularly well to the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. Where pupils have specific needs, the school makes effective use of liaison with outside agencies to ensure that they are well supported. The school works hard with parents to improve attendance. All pupils now have individual targets in English, mathematics and personal development. As a result, pupils are more aware of what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The involvement of pupils in the school and in their learning has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Access to and use of computers by adults and pupils is also greatly improved. There are many pockets of good practice but leaders have not focused enough on ensuring that this is drawn together and spread across the school. Senior leaders have not been explicit in making pupils' good progress the enduring and over-arching priority.

The enlarged senior leadership team is influential and provides good support to middle managers. There are good arrangements to track pupils' progress, the information is effectively analysed by senior staff and the key messages are given to teachers. However, senior leaders recognise that there is not enough planned, regular dialogue with individual teachers to help them fully understand the key messages from the tracking information and make teachers accountable for their pupils' progress. There is a significant amount of lesson observation by the leadership team but lesson observations do not yet concentrate enough on the key things that make a significant difference to the learning and progress of pupils.

Governors have a good knowledge of the school's strengths and most of the areas for improvement. They provide a good level of support for leaders and are not afraid to take difficult decisions. However, they are not yet playing a full part in creating a longer-term plan for the school and they have not been insistent enough on making pupils' good progress the key priority.

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?	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	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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.

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	2
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and for being so friendly and helpful. It was very useful to hear how much you like your school. We really enjoyed our visit and want to share with you what we discovered. We think you go to a satisfactory school, with some things that are good about it.

What we liked most about your school

- You get off to a good start in the nursery.
- The school cares well for you, based on treating all of you as individuals.
- You are happy and feel safe in school.
- Most of you behave well and enjoy lessons, trips, visits and clubs.
- Your parents and carers are pleased you come to this school.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Get everybody across the school to work together more so that you make good progress in all classes.
- Give the more able learners more demanding work in lessons.
- In mathematics, provide more support for those of you who find mathematics hard to learn.

You are a credit to your school. Keep working hard and making the most of your time in school. We wish you every success in the future.