

Askern Spa Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	106673
Local Authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	309195
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Terry McDermott

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr D Ridley
Headteacher	Mr R Leedale
Date of previous school inspection	27 September 2004
School address	Sutton Road Askern Doncaster South Yorkshire DN6 0AQ
Telephone number	01302 700332
Fax number	01302 708832

Age group	7–11
Inspection dates	28–29 April 2008
Inspection number	309195

© Crown copyright 2008

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 three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This larger than average school serves a village community to the north of Doncaster, in an area of some social and economic disadvantage. Pupil numbers are declining. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic heritage is below average. Almost all pupils speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award, Activemark and the FA Charter Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement and standards, and their attendance.

The school has suffered significant disruption to its staffing over an extended period of time. This has had a large impact on the progress pupils make and the standards they achieve. Although the school is improving, it is not yet fully effective or providing satisfactory value for money. Standards are too low and pupils do not make enough progress. This is the case in English, mathematics and science, and is the legacy of significant disruptions to staffing over several years. Organisational changes and a more stable staff are beginning to make a difference, and are resulting in some improvements in the progress made by pupils in the current Year 6. The current Year 4 has made good progress since entering the school.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are unfailingly polite, behave well in and out of lessons, and take on responsibility willingly and sensibly. Their relationships with adults are good. Attendance remains stubbornly below the national average, and is preventing some pupils from making as much progress as they should. The quality of teaching is satisfactory. During the inspection there were several examples of good learning when teachers challenged pupils to work independently, and at a high pace. Teaching, however, is not consistently of the good standard required to help pupils learn rapidly, and catch up on ground lost in earlier years. The satisfactory curriculum provides pupils with many opportunities to broaden their horizons through a range of visits, good quality music lessons, and the introduction of French. The care, guidance and support the school provides for its pupils are satisfactory overall. Teachers know the children well and this allows them to target their support accurately. The school's system for tracking the progress pupils are making is also accurate and reliable. It provides a solid base for the increasingly effective guidance pupils are receiving in helping them to improve.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The senior leadership team and subject leaders are moving the school forward, but there remains a great deal of lost ground to recover. Leaders can identify what needs to be done, and there is evidence of the beneficial impact of actions taken in several areas of the school's work; in, for example, the devolved leadership in the upper school (Years 5 and 6), and the lower school (Years 3 and 4), in the coordination of subjects across the school, and in the increasing use being made of information garnered from the school's assessment system. This shows that the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that all pupils benefit from consistently well taught lessons, and maintain a good rate of progress as they move through each year.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Pupils enter the school in Year 3 with below average standards. The significant difficulties faced by the school in the recent past have impacted markedly on the progress pupils make over time and on the standards they are reaching.

Standards at the end of Year 6 in 2007 were exceptionally low, but showed some improvement from the previous year. Because standards remain very low in Year 6, achievement in English, mathematics and science is inadequate. During the inspection, there was clear evidence that progress in lessons is improving and is now broadly satisfactory. However, the significant underachievement caused by the effects of seriously disrupted teaching in recent years has not been dealt with robustly enough, and remains to be fully eradicated.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils are polite, behave well consistently, and cooperate together maturely in class and in the playground. They work hard in lessons and are prepared to offer their opinions publicly without fear of ridicule. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say they feel safe and enjoy their time at school. They say that when bullying does occur, it is dealt with quickly and fairly. The democratically elected school council has representatives from all year groups. It meets weekly, controls its own budget, and is active in helping the school to function smoothly as a community. Its members take on responsibilities within the school, raising money for charitable causes, and ensuring that more vulnerable pupils are fully included in the life of the school. Pupils take plenty of exercise, making full use of the school's good facilities for sport. A large majority of pupils take advantage of the range of healthy options offered at lunchtimes. Too many pupils, however, do not attend school regularly enough. This presents a barrier to overall progress, undermines standards, and, as a consequence, makes preparations for pupils' future economic well-being ineffective.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory but not yet consistently strong enough to eradicate past underachievement. In all lessons, teachers have high expectations that pupils will behave well. Pupils respond well to these expectations. Relationships between adults and pupils are good and, as a result, pupils enjoy being in happy learning environments. Pupils know what they are going to learn because teachers tell them in advance. In the best lessons, the work set by teachers is well matched to pupils' learning needs. Teachers provide regular opportunities for pupils to work independently. These lessons move along briskly and challenge pupils to think for themselves. Too many other lessons, however, lack the necessary pace and dynamism to inspire pupils enough. Pupils are too often held on a tight rein as teachers talk for too long, or spend too much time on one task. In these lessons, pupils are not stretched enough at the limits of what they know and can do, and learning inevitably slows.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

While the curriculum has some strengths and is satisfactory overall, it does not promote pupils' literacy and numeracy skills well enough. Consequently, the standards pupils achieve in English and mathematics are too low. Music, dance, food technology and drama feature regularly in the curriculum. Many pupils learn to play a musical instrument and enjoy singing in the school choir. Teachers have started to link different subjects together in meaningful ways but this development is incomplete. The curriculum is adapted well for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, helping them make satisfactory progress towards their targets. Pupils from different home and cultural backgrounds are given equal access to all that the curriculum offers. Regular visits and visitors to the school, including residential visits for Years 4, 5 and 6, enliven the curriculum and enrich pupils' experiences. A good range of extra-curricular sporting and creative activities promote pupils' fitness, health and enjoyment. Success in local competitions and opportunities to perform to a wide audience are a source of considerable pride. Personal, social and health education effectively allows pupils to examine significant life issues and to understand the importance of staying safe and being healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory overall. The school's procedures for safeguarding, including child protection, are clear, well documented and meet current requirements. All staff undertake appropriate training and know their roles and responsibilities well. The school is sensitive to the needs of its pupils, and takes all reasonable actions to ensure their personal well-being and safety. Adults know the pupils well and are trusted by them. Pupils have a sense of confidence and safety, knowing there is an adult they can turn to should the need arise. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in lessons through targeted individual support and carefully planned intervention strategies. This helps them to make better progress than their classmates. The school measures the progress pupils are making reliably and regularly. Many teachers are using the information provided to set work which is well matched to pupils' needs, and to set challenging targets for improvement, both in lessons and over periods of time. However, this is not consistent and the full impact of this work has yet to result in higher standards. Procedures to improve attendance are not rigorous enough to ensure all pupils come to school regularly.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear team spirit within the school and morale is good. Senior and middle leaders know what needs to be improved and are working positively together to tackle areas of weakness. Many are undertaking, or have already completed, recognised national leadership qualifications. Recent initiatives to improve standards in English are proving successful; standards are rising strongly in mathematics, and both are underpinned by a reliable and honest whole-school assessment system. However, school self-evaluation is generally too optimistic, but only because leaders did not give sufficient consideration to the longer-term impact on standards that the school's recent difficulties have created. In lessons more pupils are now making satisfactory or better progress, and the school

confidently expects results in the 2008 Year 6 tests to be higher than last year. School governance is satisfactory. The recently reconstituted governing body is knowledgeable, confident, and beginning to be a true critical friend of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
The behaviour of learners	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	4

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	4
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?	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Askern Spa Junior School, Doncaster, DN6 0AQ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking with you and looking at your work. We found your school to be a happy place, but we also found that it is not helping you to learn fast enough. Therefore, we are giving the school a 'Notice to Improve'. An inspector will visit your school again soon to check how things are going.

We were impressed with the following things about Askern Spa:

- It is clear that you enjoy coming to school. You get on well together, your behaviour in class and in the playground is good, and you are very polite.
- The headteacher and all the other adults in the school take care of you. They make sure that you are safe and well looked after.
- The school is good at measuring what you know and understand.
- There is a good range of activities both in class and after school that should help you to learn.

However, we found that you should have learned more things by this time in school, and so we have asked the school to do the following:

- Improve how well you do and the progress you make, in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching in lessons, so that those lessons that are satisfactory at the moment become good. This will help you to learn things more quickly as you move up each year.
- Make sure more of you come to school regularly. If you don't come to school, you can't learn.

Please continue to be the happy and well-behaved children you already are. Thank you once again for helping us, and may I wish you all good luck for the future.