

# Ashton Gate Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108912
<b>Local Authority</b>	Bristol, City of
<b>Inspection number</b>	309834
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April –1 May 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jon Palethorpe

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	410
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Matthew Sims
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Willson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2004
<b>School address</b>	Ashton Gate Road Bristol BS3 1SZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	0117 9030236
<b>Fax number</b>	0117 9030237

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large primary school, situated near the centre of Bristol, draws pupils from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The school has an above average number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but a well below average number of pupils with English as an additional language. Attainment on entry varies from year to year, but has steadily risen from below the level expected four years ago to broadly average now. The school has the Healthy Schools Award and the Eco-Schools Bronze 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. It is improving fast and has come a long way in the last two years. The whole school community has a shared vision and is committed to high standards. The collaboration to ensure that pupils do well is extensive, and includes staff, governors, parents, extended schools' partnership, out of school provision, and a considerable number of external agencies. Parents are very supportive of the school and its mission statement, 'Creative thinkers for life'. Parents are pleased with the school and comment, for example, on the 'very supportive and inclusive environment, with good involvement of parents'.

There is good provision in the Foundation Stage, enabling children to make a very secure start to school life. This strong start is in personal development as well as academic learning. Well tailored, stimulating activities encourage children's curiosity and desire to learn. The result is that children are now entering Year 1 with skills and knowledge that are above those expected for their age.. Pupils' progress is good overall during their time in the school, but it is not consistent. As well as being particularly good in the Foundation Stage, teaching is also at its best in Years 5 and 6. This is why pupils are able to achieve above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6.

Teachers are committed to developing their own expertise in order to raise pupils' attainment. This is evidenced in the recent Investors in People review, and the school's lesson observation files. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory, although there is some variation in teaching quality throughout the school. All teachers manage behaviour well and promote positive attitudes and personal development, but teaching does not always fully challenge the higher ability pupils.

Effective pastoral care is at the heart of much of the school's work, ensuring that the pupils are happy to come to school and eager to learn in an environment free from anxiety or concern. The curriculum is innovative, and successfully combines academic rigour with a breadth to include creativity. Links between subjects are being made well through a variety of ventures such as the '5x5x5 creativity project' for creativity in the early years, and the 'Leonardo Project' to link art and science.

Leadership and management are good. Leaders now recognise that the school must retain its broad creative curriculum, but also strive for higher standards. The impact of this is already being felt, as can be seen in the improved performance of Year 6 pupils last year, but new strategies are not yet fully embedded throughout the school. In particular, the use of targets and marking to provide academic guidance so that pupils know how to improve their work is inconsistent. A deficit budget has been managed exceedingly well to ensure that it has not affected pupils' attainment. This has been achieved by very careful attention to ensure the best value for money in all spending and the use of the school's own staff for development. For example, good teachers are supporting and developing others in the school.

The school's recent success in raising standards, together with a good curriculum and continued work to make teaching even more effective, indicate a good capacity for further improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Children have a smooth induction into the Nursery and equally smooth transition to the Reception Year and then onto Year 1. Skills and

knowledge are broadly at the level expected for children entering the Nursery, although it is steadily improving year by year. Progress is now good and the majority of children are not only reaching the expected goals but many are exceeding them at the end of the Foundation Stage. They are particularly high in creative development and personal, social and emotional development,.. Daily phonics lessons have had a big impact on children's ability to link sounds and letters. Higher ability children are being well challenged. There are good opportunities for children to make choices about their learning. Teaching is good overall, but just occasionally teaching does not focus children's attention sufficiently. Children's development is assessed systematically and thoroughly, and the next steps for learning are clearly identified. There is a well planned outdoor curriculum in the Nursery where good use of the outside area enables children to move freely between activities indoors and outdoors. Spontaneous moments are used well, such as using a puddle for role play for firemen's hoses. The lack of a designated outside area for Reception limits the range of activities there.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that teaching always challenges the higher ability pupils fully.
- Ensure that academic guidance is consistent across the school so that all pupils clearly know how to improve their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. This is sustaining the considerable improvement made in 2007, when the school's results were better than in any previous year. These better standards are largely attributable to the focus the school now has on raising pupils' attainment. Pupils' skills in writing factual reports in English and interpreting data in mathematics are two of the areas the school is concentrating on to raise standards further. Standards are average at the end of Year 2. This is an improvement on the 2007 Year 2 results, which the school acknowledges were disappointing and involved some under-achievement, particularly for the pupils who should have reached the higher levels. The school identified the reasons for some pupils' underperformance in 2007 and remedial actions are proving effective. Progress is good overall, but is not consistently so throughout the school. It is most rapid in the Foundation Stage and Years 5 and 6.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils are developing as sensible, mature young people. Most have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and ably talk about the school's efforts to foster this. They know the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Year 2 pupils, for example, clearly enjoy 'Take Ten' daily exercises and pupils of all ages value the healthy tuck shop. Pupils have a good understanding of safe practices. They are enthusiastic about school. Attendance is broadly average with holidays in term time preventing it from being higher. The school is now working hard to reduce such absences. Behaviour is good both in and around the school and pupils show positive attitudes to work.

Pupils are active in the local community, for example, preparing to host a local arts festival and providing exhibits. The school council is developing well and is playing an increasingly active role, for example, planting trees and organising rotas for the playground. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously and undertake activities to support charities. Their eco work is

impressive. They diligently carry out tasks such as monitoring the school's energy usage. Pupils' good skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology prepare them well for future life. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to be reflective in assemblies. However, their understanding of the cultural diversity of Britain is rather limited.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall. They are particularly effective in the Foundation Stage, giving children a good start to school, and in Years 5 and 6 pushing up the standards of older pupils. Teaching and learning are getting even better because of a number of recent initiatives. For example, work scrutinies by subject leaders have been very helpful in identifying how teachers can make their teaching better. As a result of checks made on the effectiveness of teaching, teachers are now planning together where relevant, expecting better presentation from pupils and making sure assessment is consistently used to identify any dips in learning and rates of progress.

Relationships in lessons are particularly good and most pupils are keen to learn. Often, work is adapted well to meet all pupils' needs, but in some lessons, higher ability pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Sometimes, there is a tendency for teachers to talk for too long or for not long enough.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

A recent review of provision is ensuring that pupils enjoy a rich and varied curriculum which gives them a wide range of experiences. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a strong emphasis on creative arts, music, dance and sport, but not to the detriment of the core subjects. Provision for English and mathematics is good. There is a particular focus on letters and sounds in the Foundation Stage, and writing across the school, which is leading to improved standards.

The school provides a wide range of visits to museums, castles and to local areas to look at plants and wildlife. A good variety of visitors come into school to talk to and work with the children, such as local artists. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, with good systems in place to ensure that learning support assistants follow effective support programmes.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pastoral care is a strength of the school. All pupils are known well and valued by staff, and they feel secure. Parents are very positive about the quality of care shown to their children. There are good relationships in school and pupils are confident to approach an adult if they have a problem. One said, 'Teachers understand when you need help.' Pupils are confident that rare incidents of bullying or disputes will be dealt with quickly. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and child protection procedures are all securely in place. Good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities enables them to progress at the same rate as other pupils. This support is enhanced by effective use of outside agencies.

There are good systems now in place for the assessing and tracking of pupils' progress. However, academic guidance through the use of targets is not consistent and pupils are not always clear enough about the next steps needed to improve their work. There are some examples of good marking containing helpful comments but this is not consistent in all classes.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher has been instrumental in bringing the school to its present position; a significant improvement in the last two years. She has successfully raised the awareness of the staff and governors regarding the school's strengths and weaknesses and has established a strong commitment to raising standards. She now has a team of people who are all focused on this goal. The role of the subject leaders is developing well with work scrutinies, but is not sufficiently robust with lesson observations. Governance is outstanding. The governing body is fully aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors are supportive and robustly challenge what the school is doing, particularly concerning financial matters, where they have played an important part in the school's recovery from a deficit budget. The monitoring of teaching and scrutiny of work by senior managers, including core subject coordinators, is having a positive impact on raising standards of teaching and learning and pupils' progress.

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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	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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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 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	2
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	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

<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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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	1
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**

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashton Gate Primary School, Bristol, BS3 1SZ

Thank you all for being so helpful when we visited your school. We thoroughly enjoyed being with you and found you to be polite and cheerful, obviously enjoying your time at school.

The school takes good care of you and is helping you to grow up as sensible young people. We watched you in class and saw that you pay good attention and try hard. On the playground, you get on well together and behave sensibly. You understand well the importance of keeping yourselves healthy. We noticed that you put this into practice by eating healthily and taking plenty of exercise.

You have a good start to school in the Nursery and Reception Years. You also do particularly well in Years 5 and 6. Overall, you make good progress during your time in school because much of the teaching is good. You have a good and stimulating curriculum that gives you lots of experiences and helps to make school enjoyable.

We have asked the adults to make sure that the teaching always challenges all of you fully, particularly those of you who find learning quite easy. We have also asked the adults to make sure that you all have targets and know them well, and that their marking shows you how to improve.

You can do your bit by making sure that you always work hard. Thank you once again for being so polite and helpful.

Yours sincerely

Jon Palethorpe Lead inspector