

Ashton Vale Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108913
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	309835
Inspection date	28 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Patricia Potheary

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	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	145
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jack House
Headteacher	Vivien Champeney
Date of previous school inspection	20 October 2003
School address	Avebury Road Ashton Vale Bristol BS3 2QG
Telephone number	01179 030383
Fax number	0117 9030384

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashton Vale is a smaller than average primary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small minority from a variety of other ethnic groups. Ashton Vale is part of the Ashton and Bedminster Down Extended School Partnership.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ashton Vale is a good, caring and successful school where pupils are happy and develop well personally and academically. The school environment is stimulating. The school runs smoothly and staff and pupils demonstrate a keen sense of purpose in everything they do. When pupils join the school their attainment is lower than is found nationally and much lower in communication, language and literacy. By the end of Reception, they are beginning to catch up with children in other schools and by the time they leave Year 6, standards are broadly average indicating good overall progress. This is largely as a result of strong, well-focused teaching and thorough systems which effectively guide pupils in reaching their targets. In 2007, pupils made outstanding progress in science and standards in this subject were well above average. From the very beginning of Reception, writing is the weakest skill and although pupils are now beginning to make good progress in writing, standards in this subject remain relatively low.

School leaders work effectively to increase progress and improve achievements for all pupils. They have introduced some well-regarded programmes to support writing, mathematics and science as well as other subjects, and positive results are beginning to show. The school sets and exceeded some challenging whole-school targets in 2007 and is on track to improve on this in 2008. Despite this good progress, expectations of how many pupils will reach the higher National Curriculum levels is lower than is found nationally and much lower than the school's own expectations in science. Nevertheless, those few pupils identified as gifted and talented do well.

The majority of parents are positive about the school's work. Parents believe pupils are well cared for and the vast majority believe they are making good progress. Pupils enjoy school a great deal, as one of them explained, 'Lessons are not just about work, they are really interesting'. This comment reflects the consistently good quality teaching and learning and the way, in which teachers inspire pupils to do their best by the lessons, they receive.

The strong curriculum provides a wealth of interesting opportunities for pupils to extend their horizons and develop good personal skills. They are encouraged, for example, to take responsibility and their good contribution to the community includes involvement with re-development of a local green area and setting of their own class rules. Pupils behave well and safely and show considerable respect and care for others. Their good basic skills, including information and communication technology, mature ability to work in teams and strong social skills mean that pupils are well prepared for their future education and beyond.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress during their time in Reception because provision is strong. Although attainment on entry is low, by the time they leave, children meet national expectations in all areas of learning, although few exceed them. When children first arrive, their numeracy and literacy skills are particularly limited. Good teaching and an inspirational curriculum soon helps them to catch up with their peers in other schools so that they begin, for example, to count easily and discuss things confidently. Writing remains the area where they struggle the most. They enter Year 1 having made good progress and with well developed social, emotional and personal skills. The Reception is well led and constantly developed to improve the learning

environment. Children have plenty of opportunity to learn outside in a stimulating and very well organised space, which encourages investigation. For example, after one session, children were excited to discuss how they had run water through guttering, and they take particular pleasure in measuring new growth in their plants. Occasionally, however, children are expected to sit listening for too long and become restless.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase expectations so that more pupils reach the higher levels of achievement.
- Take steps to ensure that the recent good progress in writing is sustained and that standards in this subject are improved.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils of all ages make good progress and achieve well from a low base, and in the case of literacy, from a particularly low, baseline. This includes pupils who find learning difficult. Standards for the first time are now in line with national averages by the time pupils leave the school. The good progress evident in 2007 has continued owing to some well thought through curriculum initiatives and improved target setting. Achievement in science is the most successful, although in mathematics and reading it is also strong. Standards in writing remain low throughout the school although recent improvements show that pupils are beginning to make good progress in their written work. Those few pupils who are identified by the school as more able make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Despite this, from Reception onwards, significantly fewer pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics and English than is found nationally. In science this is reversed with more than twice as many pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum Level 5 in 2007 than was found nationally, which is outstanding.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The vast majority of pupils are keen to learn and really enjoy school, citing interesting lessons, the friendly attitudes from staff and pupils and the equipment they have in the playground as reasons. The school has invested in some outstanding playground facilities which results in highly active, amicable and inventive play. In these circumstances, it is unusual to find that attendance, though improving, is below average. This is because too many parents choose to take their children on holiday during term time, which does affect the achievement of a few. Pupils work together very well and have a well-developed sense of fair play, which results in good and often exemplary behaviour, allowing the school day and lessons to run smoothly. Pupils relish taking responsibility, for example by acting as receptionists at lunchtime, befriending others at playtimes and caring for the environment. They show a good awareness of how to keep safe and are concerned for the welfare of others, and so there is very little bullying. Pupils' effective preparation for the future includes a broadening understanding of the wider world, an appreciation and respect for the cultures of others and a strong community awareness.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are very interesting with plenty of practical activities to motivate and inspire pupils. Pupils take pleasure in a wide range of lessons, finding them the most enjoyable part of school. One pupil at the end of a mathematics lesson said, 'Oh that was fun' and the others all agreed. Another pupil typically explained, 'teachers are very supportive and explain stuff well'. Pupils particularly enjoy the system of challenges linked to their targets which helps them progress more quickly. Teachers assess work carefully so that lessons are planned well to help pupils reach their individual targets. Teaching assistants contribute significantly to this work. Opportunities occasionally lack challenge for a few pupils. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, and the quality of relationships in lessons are usually very good and pupils understand well how to learn and think for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is planned well to build learning systematically for pupils in mixed age classes. There are many links with other organisations to enhance provision, which includes an effective programme to support pupils identified as gifted and talented. Despite this, there are not enough opportunities for more pupils to achieve the higher levels in the national tests. Provision in science is strong, and stems from a successful focus on practical investigations. The curriculum is exceptionally rich with a wide range of clubs, projects, visits and visitors. These support pupils' good personal development and help bring learning to life. Visits, in particular, are used well as springboards for pupils' learning. Referring to one museum visit, a pupil recalled how 'It made our history topic much more interesting, and we could even dress as Victorians'. Provision in the arts and sports is also strong, developing confidence and a sense of self-worth in many pupils. Initiatives to encourage healthy living are successful and pupils enjoy a good range of physical activities and understand well the importance of healthy eating.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures to safeguard pupils are robust which is why pupils feel safe and know that staff will listen if they have any problems. Parents are justifiably confident that their children are well looked after at school. Support and guidance for pupils' personal development is very thorough and the school works well with external agencies to provide support for pupils when this is required. There are also increasingly effective systems to set appropriate individual targets and track pupils' progress towards them, providing support where necessary. This regular process means that most pupils, including those who find learning difficult, do well. The targets set for a small minority of pupils are not always challenging enough in mathematics and English. Effective procedures help pupils to settle in quickly when they start at the school, and successfully help to prepare Year 6 pupils for the next stage in education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, governors and a committed staff work tirelessly and effectively to improve the life chances of the pupils. The whole tone set is one of kind, supportive encouragement, which is evident throughout the day. The school understands its strengths and weaknesses well through thorough self-evaluation. The resulting actions, intended to improve pupils' personal development and academic progress, are now showing some good results. There have been clear improvements in writing, problem solving in mathematics, reading and science. The capacity to improve is therefore good. The school now sets and meets some challenging targets. Nevertheless the number of pupils expected to reach the higher levels is significantly lower in mathematics and English than it is in science. The school realises this and is working to include a wider group of pupils in the opportunities provided through the gifted and talented initiative. The school fosters extensive links with other agencies, which strongly support the good work being undertaken in all areas.

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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 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 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	3
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

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 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	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

27 February 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashton Vale Primary School, Bristol, BS3 2QG

Thank you for being so welcoming when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you very much, joining you for lunch and seeing some of your lessons.

Your school has a friendly and caring atmosphere. It is a good school, with many exciting things going on, just as you told us. Good teaching helps all of you to make good progress and your lessons are enjoyable. The school agrees to help even more of you reach the higher levels in mathematics and English. We have also asked them to keep up the improvements in writing to help you all do even better. We are sure that you will discuss this with your teachers and help them by working hard and doing your best to reach your targets.

Staff and governors do a good job in running the school and seeing that it keeps improving. There have been, for example, some good improvements in mathematics, reading, writing and especially in science.

You have a good curriculum and your teachers see to it that you have lots of activities to keep you interested, particularly the number of visits and projects you take on. You were keen to tell us that the school also keeps you safe and looks after you well. It is pleasing to see that you are helping yourselves by taking plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet. Your behaviour is also good which ensures that lessons run smoothly and you can concentrate on your learning.

We were impressed with the responsibilities that you take on within the school and how much you help in the local community. You clearly enjoy coming to school. We think that this, alongside your good skills in working together, will help prepare you well for your next school and future lives. We would like to see you carry on with the good work you all do to help the school develop further.

Yours faithfully

Lead inspector