

Ascot Heath Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109867
Local Authority	Bracknell Forest
Inspection number	310126
Inspection date	4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	194
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Michelle Anderson
Headteacher	Mrs Catherine Bates
Date of previous school inspection	10 November 2003
School address	Rhododendron Walk New Road Ascot SL5 8PN
Telephone number	01344 882631
Fax number	01344 890932

Age group	4-7
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Introduction

An Additional Inspector carried out the inspection. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the quality and standards in the Foundation Stage. He also focused on how well pupils make progress, with a particular emphasis on science and information and communication technology (ICT), since the school had identified the need to improve provision in these subjects. In addition, he checked on the quality of teaching, the curriculum and the impact of changes in staffing, including the new management, on pupils' achievement.

The inspector gathered evidence from an analysis of information and data about pupils' achievements provided by the school, observations of parts of lessons, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, governors and pupils. The inspector did not investigate other aspects of the school's work in detail, but found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These judgements have been included, where appropriate, in this report.

Description of the school

Ascot Heath Infant School is smaller than the average size for a primary school. It shares an attractive and spacious site with Ascot Heath CE Junior School. There are seven classes, two of which are mixed-age. Most pupils are of White British heritage. A small number of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, but very few are in the early stages of learning English. Pupils' social backgrounds vary, but many have relatively advantaged home circumstances. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is below average. The school has the Basic Skills Quality mark, and Active School and Healthy School awards. There have been significant changes in staffing over the past year. These included the appointment of a new headteacher and two new class teachers in September 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Ascot Heath Infant is a good school. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are consistently high and teaching is good. Pupils benefit from well-planned activities that excite and interest them, and receive good quality care and guidance. The change in leadership has not affected the performance of the school, and its pupils continue to make good progress both academically and in their personal development. Standards this year are on course to be as high as in previous years.

One of the school's many strengths is the strong climate for learning in all classes. This results from the good relationships within the school community, and pupils' enjoyment of learning. 'I really like my lessons because we find out about lots of things', was one of the many appreciative comments made by the pupils. Their parents have similarly positive views. One summarised these well when writing, 'I feel that my children are treated as individuals, and I am extremely pleased with the way that their needs are met.'

The new headteacher is already building on the well-established systems for managing the school and has introduced a number of useful initiatives to further improve the quality of information on which monitoring depends. These include a baseline assessment of children when they join the Reception class, to replace the previous system of collating assessments made in a wide range of pre-school provision. There is also a system for setting individual targets for pupils to achieve in Key Stage 1. However, the school recognises that both of these initiatives have shortcomings. The method of establishing a consistent baseline for teachers to build on does not yet provide finely detailed information for senior managers. This is because it requires teachers to record what, rather than how well, children achieve. Similarly, the target-setting initiative is not yet successful enough. This is because links between the pupils' targets and their learning, for example through teachers' marking of their work, are not always clear. The consequences are that pupils are not yet involved enough in their learning, and teachers sometimes miss opportunities to assess their pupils in a focused way. Because of the regular checks made on pupils' progress and the good quality monitoring of lessons, the headteacher has an accurate understanding of the effectiveness of the school. However, she understands the need for better quality information from secure baseline assessment and target setting to help sharpen the already good self-evaluation process.

This school is constantly striving to improve, and bases its development plan securely on careful evaluations of its performance. These showed, for example, that teaching and learning in science were not as good as in English and mathematics. Therefore, the senior managers implemented a raft of measures to remedy the situation. During the inspection, a science week was underway and the pupils' high levels of interest and enjoyment, together with the good quality work produced, provided clear proof of its success. The school is aware that provision in ICT also has weaknesses, but has not yet addressed this issue. The interactive whiteboards in classes provide many opportunities for teachers and pupils to use ICT as a tool for learning. However, the ratio of computers to pupils falls well short of the national norm. This limits the frequency with which pupils can practise the skills learned.

Teaching is good, but there is some variability in the quality of lessons. In all classes, teachers plan their lessons carefully and, because their assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate, they are good at pitching work to reflect different ages and levels of ability. A particularly noteworthy example of this was the science work in a class of Year 1 and 2 pupils. All were

engrossed in the challenge of using a variety of materials to construct outdoor shelters for their teddy bears, and the Year 2 pupils also had to apply the scientific principle of fair testing when checking on the suitability of the finished products. Pupils' eagerness to learn and their love of being at school are key factors in the good progress they make. They enjoy challenge, and the good teaching that they receive generally ensures that they are not disappointed. However, when teachers focus more on the activities than on the intended learning, pupils make less progress. Skilled teaching assistants provide good quality support for the pupils who struggle with literacy or numeracy or those in need of help in understanding, such as those learning to speak English. This successfully helps them to keep up with their classmates.

Pupils show a keen awareness of the importance of keeping safe and of healthy lifestyles. The school is good at promoting this in an enjoyable way through, for example, the weekly playground challenges for exercise that are demonstrated to pupils in assembly to help them understand what they have to achieve. Through their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong; consequently, behaviour is generally good. In closely controlled situations, such as lessons, it is often impeccable. The pupils acknowledge that there are occasions when a few pupils misbehave, usually at playtimes, but they are mature enough to appreciate that this is part of learning to get on with others.

There is good leadership at all levels, including the support and challenge provided by governors through their interest and involvement. There is a strong commitment to continuous development and generally robust systems to help ensure that this happens. Therefore, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children get a good start to their education in the Reception classes and, by the time they move into Year 1, standards are generally above average. Teaching reflects a secure understanding of how very young children learn. Teachers plan the activities well, and children have many opportunities to make choices and develop their social skills and confidence. The highly practical approach to learning, both indoors and out, effectively promotes all aspects of children's development. However, the impact of the work done to promote children's independent learning is sometimes reduced when adults over-direct it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Sharpen the self-evaluation process by refining the new systems for assessing children on entry and setting targets for pupils to achieve in Key Stage 1.
- Improve provision in ICT.

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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	1
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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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

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

17 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ascot Heath Infant School, Ascot, SL5 8PN

Thank you for being so helpful when I came to your school to find out how well you are getting on. I particularly enjoyed looking at your work and talking to some of you.

I agree with your parents that you go to a good school.

There is so much I like about your school that I cannot mention everything, so here is a list of what I think are the most important things.

- You make good progress. By the time you leave at the end of Year 2, you are better at reading, writing and maths than pupils in most other schools. You should be very proud of all of this.
- Everyone in your school is friendly and welcoming, and your behaviour is usually good.
- You know a lot about how to be healthy and safe.
- You learn well in lessons because your lessons are usually good.
- Your teachers are good at planning lots of interesting things for you to do.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- The people who help run your school do a good job in making sure that you get a good education, especially your headteacher.

Even in a good school like yours there is always something that could be better. Your headteacher agrees, and wants your school to be really excellent. To do this she has made lots of changes since she took charge. Some of these, which are to do with checking on how well you are getting on, need to be improved a bit more to make them really good. I have also asked your school to make sure that you use computers more to help you with your work. Your headteacher already knows that you need to do this, and is trying to work out a plan to make it happen.

I am sure that you will continue to have great success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector