

# Ashfield Infants' School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 112146             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cumbria            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310797             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 29–30 January 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Pat Kime HMI       |

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>                | 4–7  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 156  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                 |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mr David Hodgson                                   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mrs Pat Smith                                      |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 March 2004                                       |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Newlands Lane<br>Workington<br>Cumbria<br>CA14 3JG |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01900 325245                                       |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01900 325247                                       |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
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| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 29–30 January 2008 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Ashfield Infants' School's pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds which, taken overall, are broadly average. Several families who live outside the school's usual catchment area choose Ashfield Infants' for their children. The proportion of pupils identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is around the national average. The vast majority of pupils are White British. A very small number are learning English as an additional language. The school has been awarded Healthy School status and Investors in People status, and it holds an Activemark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ashfield Infants' School is a good school. It provides a good education and high quality care in a welcoming, friendly atmosphere. Parents have a very positive view of the school. Many wrote to the inspectors. They said how much they appreciate the approachability of the headteacher and her staff. They know their children are well cared for and enjoying their education.

Teaching is good and, as a result, pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, test results show that standards of literacy and numeracy are above average. Teachers' assessments indicate above average standards in science. Pupils do best at reading. Progress in mathematics is not as good as in English.

The school's curriculum covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and has several strengths. The provision for pupils' personal development and well-being is very effective. Pupils learn exceptionally well how to live healthy lives and they know how to keep safe. They make good progress in social, moral and cultural development. In English and mathematics, the provision is good and, as they move up the school, pupils build well on what they have previously learned. The curriculum is enriched by many educational visits and visitors. These broaden pupils' horizons, promote enjoyment of school and aid learning. In Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2), several subjects are taught through topics. However, the way this work is planned and organised makes it hard for teachers to be sure that all pupils make good progress in these subjects. The range of after school activities offered to pupils in Key Stage 1 is outstanding.

Staff take very good care of the pupils and work well in partnership with other agencies to ensure well-being. Support and guidance for pupils in their school work are particularly good for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who need a bit of extra help to keep up.

The senior team and the governors have an accurate picture of how good the school is. They know about most of the things that could be improved and there is a satisfactory plan to guide improvement. That said, the role of staff who carry responsibility for leading and managing the school's work in the various subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped. Several of the subject development plans are not strong enough to drive improvement.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

In the Reception year, children get a very good start to their school lives. They settle to school well. They gain in confidence and enjoy learning in the well organised, attractive classrooms. Teaching is good. Staff provide a rich range of activities and make sure that learning is as appealing to boys as to girls. They keep a good check on each child's progress in all the areas of learning. They provide support for any who are at risk of falling behind. At the beginning of the year, most of what the children can do is typical for children their age. They make rapid progress. By the end of Reception, the vast majority of the children meet the expected standard for their age and a good number exceed it. Children are well prepared to tackle the Key Stage 1 programme of work. The Foundation Stage is led and managed very well. The staff team has gelled well and the team leader has a very clear understanding of how young children learn and how the school's provision might be further improved. Staff use information from monitoring children's progress to identify areas for improvement and they tackle these effectively.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the planning and organisation of work in the subjects taught through topics, ensuring that, in all these subjects, pupils build on their previous learning.
- Raise standards in mathematics to match those in English.
- Develop the subject leaders' role in promoting pupils' achievement across the curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

Standards of literacy and numeracy are above average and have been so for several years. Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from a broadly average starting point.

In 2007, pupils did best at reading, with around 40% reaching an above average standard for their age. Girls did particularly well in reading. Standards in writing were not so high but were still securely above average. In mathematics, though standards were above average, they slipped a little from the previous year and were not as far ahead of the national average as in reading and writing. The school has identified the weaker areas that caused this slight dip and begun to tackle them. The records of pupils' progress show that, compared with English, it begins to slow in mathematics in Year 1. Overall, the school is expecting slightly lower standards in 2008 but, a higher proportion of pupils are predicted to reach a high standard for their age in mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those at risk of underachieving, are identified early and given extra help. As a result, they make good progress; many reach an average standard for their age.

Pupils for whom English is an additional language make good progress in acquiring English and do well in mathematics. Teachers make sure that limited English does not hold these pupils back in other subjects

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Pupils are happy at school and they enjoy school life, particularly the range of interesting visits and visitors, and after school clubs. The rate of attendance is in line with the national average. It is affected by the poor attendance of a very small number of pupils and some pupils having holidays during term time.

Most pupils are usually very well behaved but sometimes the standard of behaviour slips. When this was seen during the inspection it was associated with less pacy or less well organised lessons where there was not enough challenge for some pupils.

The very good start children get in Reception sets them up for school life. They learn what is expected of school pupils, and develop confidence and positive attitudes to learning. This start is built on well in Key Stage 1, through the school's ethos and its teaching of personal, social and health education and citizenship. As a result, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are generally considerate of others and they understand well the difference between right and wrong. Visitors help them develop positive attitudes to cultural diversity; for example, African artists prepared a performance of music and dance with pupils.

The school is very successful at helping pupils adopt healthy lifestyles. All pupils spend the nationally recommended two hours each week on physical education. They also participate in

short daily exercise sessions and the equipment provided for them at playtimes encourages a good level of activity. The good choice of healthy school meals and the school's 'no sweets' policy ensure that pupils eat a healthy diet at school.

Pupils make a good contribution to the school as a community, for example by taking responsibilities for tasks in the classroom and through the recently formed school council. They also contribute a lot to the local community.

Pupils' good literacy and numeracy skills, good personal development and good awareness of the world of work prepare them very well for life beyond the school.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Taken overall, teaching is good. It is particularly strong in Reception. In Key Stage 1, the teaching enables pupils to make good progress in developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy. There are pockets of very effective teaching but also some lessons, in other subjects, where significant numbers of pupils learn too slowly.

The main differences between the most and least effective teaching are in:

- the clarity of the teachers' focus on what exactly the pupils are to learn
- the pace at which learning is pushed on
- the extent to which work is tailored to pupils' different needs, particularly for the more able
- the effectiveness of assessment of pupils' learning in each lesson
- the use of teaching assistant and other adults.

When the teaching is most effective, the teachers know what new knowledge, skills and understanding they expect pupils at all ability levels to gain from the lesson and the activities pupils undertake enable all to make at least good progress. Additional adults are well briefed about the purpose of the lesson so they can support learning.

In less effective lessons, particularly when a lot of different activities are planned covering several subjects, the learning purpose of some activities is not sufficiently clear. Also, some pupils get little of the teacher's attention. Consequently, in such lessons, there is a less purposeful atmosphere and, for some pupils, inadequate progress. Occasionally, in lessons that are of a satisfactory quality overall, work is not hard enough for the more able pupils who, understandably, become inattentive.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum covers all the required subjects and it has several good features. Provision is good in English and mathematics but, in some of the other subjects, work is not planned well enough at either whole-school or class level. It is not sufficiently clear exactly what the pupils should learn or how the work builds on what has gone before. Furthermore, lessons covering these subjects are sometimes not sufficiently well-organised. The result of these shortcomings is that pupils' progress is not assured. The curriculum in Reception is carefully planned and coherent and it takes good account of the interests and learning needs of boys.

The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of educational visits and visitors, and enjoyable first-hand experiences. For example, the Reception children's visit to a local travel agent

supported their learning about geography and the world of work, and it provided a stimulus for imaginative play and language development back at school. Pupils visit several local businesses, artists in different media and from different cultures work with pupils in school, and pupils have good opportunities to perform for an audience. An outstanding range of activities is offered after school for pupils in Key Stage 1. Many are sports based. They are well attended and make a very good contribution to pupils' health by promoting physical activity.

The provision to promote pupils' personal development and well-being is particularly good. The Healthy School award and Activemark recognise the school's good work in promoting active lifestyles and healthy diets.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The day to day care for pupils' well-being is very good and parents recognise this. The school's positive and caring atmosphere helps pupils to develop confidence in their ability to learn. The arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Pupils feel safe at school. Staff provide good opportunities for them to talk about any worries they might have. Pupils' good attitudes and contributions to school life are encouraged and praised, for instance by awards for 'good citizens' in school.

The support and guidance given to pupils in their school work have good features. For instance, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified early and supported well. Staff keep an eye on the rate at which each pupil is making progress and target any who are not on track to achieve what they should for extra help. Pupils have individual targets to achieve in English and mathematics. These are precise and they are updated frequently as pupils progress. At times, however, it is less clear what pupils are to learn in lessons and the more able are not always challenged to do as well as they can.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The school is characterised by its friendly, open atmosphere. Parents find the headteacher and staff very approachable. An overwhelming majority of the parents who returned the inspection questionnaire agree that the school seeks their views and takes account of their suggestions and concerns. They appreciate this. The headteacher sets the tone of the school with her example of commitment to pupils both enjoying their education and achieving well. She is also behind the developing partnerships with other educational providers in the area.

Planning for school improvement is rooted in a generally accurate view of the school's effectiveness and the senior leadership team's clear, shared view of the kind of school they want Ashfield Infants' to be. The analysis of data at whole-school level is effective and the findings influence planning for improvement. Where test results have revealed aspects of the school's work that are less successful, the steps taken to remedy matters have been effective. For example, boys are now doing better in English and more pupils are set to reach an above average standard in mathematics. However, there is not always a sharp enough focus on how what is planned will improve the quality of the school's provision and pupils' achievement or how improvement is to be measured. Whilst the leadership of Foundation Stage, English, mathematics and provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have many good features, the wider subject leadership role has not been clarified and developed sufficiently

to enable staff with this responsibility to make a significant difference to pupils' achievement. Several of the subject development plans are not sufficiently strong to promote improvement effectively.

Governors are well informed about the school's work and how effective it is. They are properly involved in planning for future developments.

The strengths in leadership and management and what has already been achieved show the school is well-placed to improve further.



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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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   | 1 |
| 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? | 3 |
| 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  | 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

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashfield Infants' School, Cumbria, CA14 3JG

You may remember that Mr Oglesby and I visited your school recently. We came to see how well all the children are learning. We enjoyed the two days we spent at your friendly school. Thank you for making us feel welcome. We thought you were well behaved and polite. Thank you also for talking to us about your work and what it's like to be a pupil at your school.

This letter is to tell you what we found. Ashfield Infants' is a good school. You do well in mathematics, a bit better still in writing, and very well in reading. Your good learning shows that you are taught well. The grown-ups take very good care of you. They make sure that you eat healthy food and get plenty of exercise. We were impressed by the number of extra activities after school for those of you in Year 1 and Year 2. The teachers help you to enjoy learning. For instance, they take you on lots of trips and they invite interesting people to work with you in school. We had a lovely time looking at photographs of the exciting things you have done.

Mrs Smith, and the staff, and the school's governors all want to make your school even better. We have suggested that they should concentrate particularly on three things:

- helping you to do as well in mathematics as in reading and writing
- planning 'activity time' carefully so that everyone makes the most of the time
- the way they decide what to do to make sure you do well in all the subjects.

I'm sure you will have some good ideas that will help them to improve your school. You might be able to suggest them to the school council. The most important things for you to do are to keep on doing your best, enjoying learning, and being kind and sensible.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime

Her Majesty's Inspector