

Ashingdon School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115275
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311897
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	253
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Mrs A Stewart
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2005
School address	Fambridge Road Ashingdon Rochford Essex SS4 3LN
Telephone number	01702 202857
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashingdon School is slightly above average in size. The school population is mainly from a White British heritage. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is well below the national average and there are no pupils at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, including those with statements, is close to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school judges itself to be good, and the inspection confirms this. The quality of teaching and leadership in the school leads to pupils making good progress in most aspects of their work and achieving well. A significant strength of the school is the positive attitudes it fosters.

The attainment of most children on entry is average. At the end of Year 2 standards are close to national averages. Almost all pupils reached at least the expected level for their age in English and mathematics in 2007. Pupils continue to achieve well through the rest of the school, so that attainment is above average overall and well above average in mathematics at the end of Year 6. Improving the teaching and learning of mathematics has been a focus over the past two years. Now, many pupils, both boys and girls, declare it to be their favourite subject. Reading standards are high, but there are weaknesses in many pupils' writing. Consequently, fewer pupils attain highly in English than in mathematics.

Pupils' personal development is good. Parents report that their children grow in confidence as they move through the school. As one wrote, 'Our children are not just taught, they blossom as individuals.' Pupils say that they love school because everyone is so friendly and helpful and they have interesting lessons. The systems for promoting good discipline work well and the result is that almost all pupils behave well. They develop tolerance, courtesy and kindness because these qualities are encouraged. The good health education programme helps them to live healthy lives and they have many opportunities to take responsibility. Their contributions to both the school and local community are outstanding.

Good teaching leads to pupils concentrating and working hard in class. Teachers plan work that is generally matched to their needs and they use praise well to encourage pupils, giving them the confidence to succeed. However, not all teachers provide enough written guidance to pupils on how to improve their work and the more able are not always stretched in literacy lessons. The curriculum is good and the excellent educational visits and special theme days enrich the pupils' learning. The systems for care, support and guidance are good. Pupils are prepared well for their future by the many opportunities to work collaboratively and take responsibility for their learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Leadership overall is good. Governors are effective and the school is well managed. It provides good value for money. There has been good improvement since the last inspection because of the headteacher's skilled and experienced leadership and there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children arrive in the Reception class with skills broadly in line with national expectations. They make good progress because staff help them settle quickly. Children behave very well and soon make many friends. They really enjoy their learning because staff make it fun and relevant. Teaching is good because it is well matched to the learning needs of individuals. There are plenty of opportunities for children to grow in independence in their learning. However, staff are not consistent in encouraging children to speak in full sentences; too often they accept nods and one word answers.

The leadership of the Foundation Stage is good. Provision has improved since the last inspection and parents are very supportive of their children's learning because they receive good

information on how to help them make progress. By the time children leave Reception class, they are well prepared for the next stage of education in the main school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop pupils' writing skills so that they communicate more clearly and accurately.
- Ensure that the higher attaining pupils are set challenging work consistently so that they can reach above average standards in literacy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In the Foundation Stage, children make good progress in literacy, numeracy and social skills because of appropriate teaching approaches. Almost all attain at least the expected standards for their age by the time they start Year 1.

Results in the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 are close to average. The progress made by pupils from Year 3 on has improved, especially in numeracy. One reason for this is that these older pupils are organised into teaching groups where work is planned to match their specific ability levels. Almost all pupils, including gifted children and those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make good progress. In Year 6, standards are currently above average overall and are well above average in mathematics. In English, pupils' achievement is hampered by a lack of accuracy in their writing, including spelling and punctuation errors, and potential high attainers are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work further. Overall, however, pupils achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of their time in school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school, partly because activities in lessons are interesting and give them many opportunities to work collaboratively. Despite this, attendance is in line with national averages, because some parents take their children out of school for holidays in term time. Pupils behave well and are clear about what is right and wrong. They have excellent relationships with adults and classmates. Pupils participate in a good amount of sport and physical activity, but there is some resistance to eating fresh vegetables and salad at lunchtimes. They know how to keep themselves safe. On the very rare occasions of bullying, they know to whom they can turn for support.

Pupils have an outstanding sense of community. They take on jobs such as 'play pals' and councillors with maturity and pride and make significant contributions to village life. This, together with good basic skills in literacy and numeracy, prepares them well for their future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good overall and outstanding in some instances. Teachers throughout the school plan and manage lessons well, creating positive learning environments in which work of quality from the pupils is encouraged and celebrated. Technology is used well to make teaching and learning interesting and stimulating. Teachers use their interactive whiteboards, linked to computers, to make teaching points clearly and pupils enjoy this. It helps to make learning fun

and pupils learn more quickly because they are interested, active and enjoying their lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities are supported well by teaching assistants. Not all teachers give enough guidance to pupils on how to improve their written work and basic errors are not always corrected.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities which help pupils to learn with fun in an interesting environment. The curriculum has been well planned in order to meet their needs and has recently been adapted to develop links between subjects. It does not however, sufficiently identify areas in which children can learn about Britain as a multi-cultural society. The school has particular strengths in the areas of mathematics and physical education. A recent focus on raising standards in mathematics, which included staff training, a review of the curriculum and increased resourcing, has been highly effective in bringing about improvements. The very good range of extra-curricular activities is supported by an excellent programme of school visits. Older children enjoy the well-organised rotation of subjects, allowing good coverage of Spanish, drama and art. Personal, social and health education has a high profile in school and coverage of work in these areas is excellent.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pupils are safe and secure while in the school's care. Welfare systems are well organised. The school meets statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils well. Parents are pleased with the way staff care for their children. As one wrote: 'The school gives my child a lot of care and they have been a great support to me too'. Staff are quick to respond, not only to the needs of vulnerable pupils, but of all those in their care.

The school supports pupils with learning difficulties well and they make good progress. Although pupils, especially higher attainers, could be helped more effectively to improve their written work, there are good aspects of academic guidance. Despite pupils not having individual targets for mathematics and English, most are clear about what they need to do to improve their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school was put into special measures three years ago because it was failing to provide an adequate education. It has made significant improvement since then under the expert guidance of the headteacher. She has identified the areas of weakness, monitored very effectively the work of staff and made judicious new appointments to improve the standard of teaching. Governors monitor the work of the school well. Subject co-ordinators take responsibility for their subject areas and lead them effectively. The newly formed leadership team functions well and has improved teamwork and communication throughout the school. Staff realise, however, that they have not done enough to raise writing standards. Good management ensures that the school runs smoothly and staff morale is high. The school is open and responsive to parents and they are appreciative of the improvements that have been made. One parent summed up the views of many: 'A strength of the school is the strong leadership.'

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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	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	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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

13 December 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashingdon School, Rochford, SS4 3LN

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful to us when we visited your school. You told us that you like your school. We were impressed with how helpful and kind you are to each other, so that the school feels like one large family. We enjoyed the lessons that we shared with you and saw how well you work. These are some more of the good things about your school.

- Your behaviour is good; you work hard and really enjoy being at school.
- You reach high standards in numeracy.
- You make outstanding contributions to the school and local community
- You learn how to work together, care for others and live healthy lives.
- Teachers make lessons enjoyable.
- Teachers, teaching assistants and all adults care for you well.
- The headteacher and other staff lead and manage the school well and have done much to improve it and make it even better for you.

We have suggested to your school some things that we think will bring about even more improvement. The most important are these.

- When teachers mark your written work, they tell you how to make your work better, so that your writing is better and more accurate.
- The teachers in literacy lessons make sure that those of you who are good at English are given challenging work so that they make even faster progress.

You can help by checking your written work carefully, to make sure that you have spelt words correctly, that you have not missed out words and that the punctuation is correct. This is a lovely school, so come every day and make the most of your time here!

Paul Cosway

Lead Inspector