

Ashley Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115855
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	312075
Inspection date	31 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Bernice Magson

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	5-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	156
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Martyn Travers
Headteacher	Mrs Pauline Dukes
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2003
School address	Lower Ashley Road Ashley New Milton BH25 5AA
Telephone number	01425 611321
Fax number	01425 623820

Age group	5-7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: how well all pupils are achieving: how the school is seeking to raise standards in writing, particularly for the more able pupils: and how well leaders and managers are managing recent changes in the school's organisation, the impact on standards and achievement and the quality of provision. Evidence was gathered from the school's records, planning and policies, from observing teaching and learning, and from discussions with children, staff and governors. Other aspects of the school's own work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included in the report.

Description of the school

This small infant school admits pupils from a diverse social community in Ashley, an area of New Milton. Children join the school in the autumn term, after their fourth birthday. Pupils are mostly of White British origin, with a few from a range of minority ethnic groups. There are more girls than boys. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of speaking English. An above average number of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, including some with severe learning needs attached to specialist provision. Eight pupils have a formal statement of special need. The school has achieved an Activemark for sport, an 'Enhanced Healthy Schools' Award, and has Investors in People status. Out-of-school care is provided each morning.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school, which caters extremely well for the needs of all its pupils. 'Together we learn, grow and achieve' is its mission, and this is very evident in the actions of pupils, staff and governors as they work together. In this happy school, pupils are enthusiastic learners and competent ambassadors of its ethos to share and respect others. Pupils are fully included in all activities. Parents are very positive about all aspects of the school and give excellent support. One parent expressed the views of many in commenting that 'her child has enjoyed the school, since the day he started. He has progressed extremely well and I will be sorry to see him leave.'

Pupils achieve very well, because the teaching is excellent. Teachers use the rigorous systems of assessment to identify the needs of each pupil and track their progress robustly. As a result, all groups of children make excellent progress towards their individual targets. From average starting points on entry, most children reach expected goals for their age by the end of the reception year, and some are working successfully within the National Curriculum. Excellent progress continues in Years 1 and 2, and pupils reach high standards by the time they leave the school. Pupils on the autistic spectrum and those with other more complex needs, who find it more difficult to develop communication, language and social skills, achieve as well as other pupils, and some reach national expectations for their age by the end of Year 2. Above average numbers of pupils are attaining higher levels in national tests in reading, writing and mathematics. Currently, the school is focusing on raising writing standards further. All pupils are encouraged to focus on the use of 'WOW' words, (more descriptive words) in their writing. A news team is formed termly from different groups of pupils to enable them to write for a real audience. Additional support is targeted to the more able pupils, so that their skills can be extended effectively. For instance, a group of more able Year 2 are working together on developing their range of vocabulary. Already pupils are taking more care with their writing and teacher assessment shows that a greater number are achieving higher levels.

Teachers have very high expectations based on their excellent subject knowledge. They pose questions skilfully for pupils to investigate and encourage independent and original ideas. Learning is meaningful. For example, photographs of Years 1 and 2 engaged in playground games ensured that their written descriptions were relevant. Lesson planning is thorough, and the evaluation of pupils' actions is robust. The curriculum ensures that the needs of every child matters. The interest of boys is promoted through a topic on dinosaurs, for instance. Very good attention is given to linking subjects across the curriculum. For example in the specialist provision, pupils in Years 1 and 2 are designing and making a board game of their own, which is effectively developing their number, language and creative skills. Very good attention is given to the inclusion of personal, social and health education and pupils have an excellent understanding for their age of how they should take care of themselves. They are developing excellent basic skills important for their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are outstanding. An inspirational headteacher and very committed senior management team have established a vibrant and thriving learning environment in which the contributions of all staff and pupils are valued and respected. They are very well supported by an excellent governing body, which shares the school's aims and values, and works extremely well for its development. As a result, this is a reflective organisation, which is honest in the appraisal of its actions, and passionate in its efforts to embrace change and bring about consistent improvement. It sets challenging targets both for the long and short-term. Leaders and managers are rigorously monitoring the recent introduction of mixed aged classes in Years

1 and 2. Teacher assessments show that pupils are gaining socially from working with pupils of a differing age and are maintaining excellent progress in all subjects. The school has an excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage provides an excellent start for children's education. There are extensive links with pre-school providers, and parents and carers, which ensures that the induction process is very smooth. The classroom is a calm and warm friendly environment, where management of children is firm but fair. As a result, children behave very well. Relationships are good between children and with adults. Teaching is excellent. Activities are planned effectively to interest children, as well as challenge them in depth. Each day children are encouraged to make decisions about their play, and access equipment responsibly. Through unobtrusive support, children concentrate well and persevere for long periods on difficult tasks, including those children with significant communication, language and social needs. When working with adults, children are eager to succeed, and are learning to take turns. The needs of each individual are monitored extensively. Excellent attention is given to ensuring that appropriate support is provided for those children with specific needs, sometimes involving outside agencies. Outdoor provision is limited. However, there are firm plans for improvement, which will enable children to have access to activities in the outdoors in all weathers.

What the school should do to improve further

There are no significant weaknesses to report. However, the inspector agrees with the school that in order to raise standards further it should build on its plans to improve outdoor provision in the Foundation Stage.

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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?	1
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

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?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
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

12 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashley Infant School, New Milton, BH25 5AA

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your school a few days ago. It was good to meet so many of you and I had a lovely time. I enjoyed finding out about all the exciting things you are doing. I am sure that you found the visit of Louis Braille very interesting and that you know a lot more about how he helped blind people to communicate. I think that you have an outstanding school and I can see why you enjoy it. What I liked most is:

- you are learning, growing and achieving extremely well together
- you reach standards above those in most schools in your reading, writing and mathematics
- you work very hard in lessons, because there are many exciting things to do
- the teachers plan activities which interest and challenge all of you
- everybody takes very good care of you and this helps you to feel safe and secure.
- your parents and carers are very glad that you go to this school
- your headteacher, teachers and governors are always looking at how well the school is doing so that it can continually improve.

Mrs Dukes and other grown ups are planning ways of improving the building, so that the children in the reception classes can play outdoors more often. I have asked them to continue, so that they can provide a greater range of exciting things for the youngest children to do.

I hope that you carry on enjoying school and learning many interesting things. I am sure that your school will continue to improve.

Yours sincerely

Bernice Magson

Lead Inspector