

# Ashwell Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117084
<b>Local Authority</b>	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	312483
<b>Inspection date</b>	22 November 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Roger Brown

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>	3-11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	231
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Chapman
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Cliff Jenkinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 November 2004
<b>School address</b>	Silver Street Ashwell Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 5QL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462 742297
<b>Fax number</b>	01462 743274

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. He investigated the following issues in depth: the impact of the school's processes to monitor, evaluate and promote pupils' progress, particularly in the Foundation Stage, the quality of pupils' personal development and the quality of the curriculum. Evidence was gathered from observations of work in classrooms and the scrutiny of the school's documentation and records of pupils' achievement and progress. In addition, there were discussions with the headteacher, governors, the teachers and a number of the pupils. The views of parents were canvassed by a questionnaire. Almost two thirds of the families responded in an overwhelmingly positive fashion. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified; these have been included in the appropriate areas of the report.

## Description of the school

Ashwell Primary is an average sized school serving Ashwell and outlying villages. The school has grown in size and is currently short of space, but four new classrooms are to be built in the summer term. Most of the pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small number from minority ethnic groups. For a very small proportion of these pupils, English is their second language. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Children start school with a level of development that is usually above national expectations. The school has been awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Sport England Activemark, and has achieved the Healthy Schools standard.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. It has successfully created a healthy, caring and stimulating environment where the pupils thrive and really enjoy their education. It is a popular school and over-subscribed, however, a fifth of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire, recorded their concerns about large class sizes in some year groups. The governors have led a highly effective campaign to deal with this issue. Work is due to start in the summer on an extension that will accommodate the pupils more comfortably. The school provides a well-rounded and effective education for its pupils. Not only do they achieve well, reaching above, and sometimes well above average standards by the end of Year 6, they also achieve excellent levels of personal development. This is because the school is well led by the headteacher who has a dedicated and committed staff. The school enjoys great support from its highly knowledgeable and extremely active governing body.

There is good leadership throughout the school. This is apparent in the rigorous analysis of the pupils' achievements and the effective target setting process that arises from this. The impact of this work can be seen from the time the children enter the Foundation Stage, where the provision is excellent, to the time pupils leave in Year 6. Standards at the end of Year 6 have always been high but recently, standards in English, where writing is particularly strong, have risen significantly and are now exceptionally high. Standards in mathematics and science are consistently above average, but there has been a small drop in the standards in mathematics, particularly amongst girls. The school acknowledges that this pattern has also begun to emerge in Year 2. Well-targeted support for pupils who have learning difficulties ensures that they make good progress and generally do better than similar pupils do nationally. Able pupils, including those with special gifts and talents do well but need even more time and support if they are to achieve all they might.

Pupils' personal development is a very high priority. Excellent systems ensure that pupils gain an exceptionally good understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles. Staff are diligent, respond sensitively to pupils concerns and meet all statutory child protection requirements. Older pupils all have responsibilities, which they carry out conscientiously. Many of these involve helping to care for the younger ones, something they enjoy and do well. The school makes excellent provision to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is outstanding. The school has highly effective links with two other schools, one in London and one in Malawi. The London school visits each spring and pupils from very different backgrounds share Ashwell School for the day and study the village. The Malawi link is presently conducted over the internet, but there are plans to extend this to inter-school visits and pupils have already been involved in fund-raising to rebuild classrooms at the Malawian school. The welcoming nature of the school is striking, a feature commented on by a number of parents whose children were new to the school. Pupils behave well. They are polite, friendly, confident and well-motivated and very much enjoy coming to school. The care and responsibility they show towards each other extends beyond the school. Pupils are currently campaigning for the district council to extend their recycling scheme to schools. Attendance is good and the school has effective procedures to check on absence issues.

The teaching is good. Many parents commented on the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff at the school, a view shared by the pupils. Most lessons are interesting, well prepared and stimulating, though some occasionally lack sparkle and pace. The teachers have a thoughtful approach to their work. They quickly change what does not work well and reinforce and extend

what has proved effective. The quality and breadth of the curriculum are excellent. Good planning ensures that all statutory elements are covered, and extended with a range of special themes and events. Each year, teachers evaluate the work that has been covered, and rewrite the programme for the coming year. This ensures that the work is topical and relevant, not just for the pupils, but also for the teachers. The move towards the thematic approach clearly motivates the pupils, but the teachers work hard to ensure that in doing so they do not miss out the essential skills pupils need to develop. Pupils are excited about the practical and investigative activities they undertake which 'make learning fun'. The school's focus is not just about pupils' gaining knowledge and skills but also about them becoming life-long learners. Pupils have great opportunities to explore music, art, drama and sport. Strong links with the local high school, and the many extra-curricular activities, visits to industry and to other places of interest also contribute to the outstanding curriculum and prepare pupils extremely well for their on-going education and future lives.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The quality of speaking and listening has improved and standards have been maintained at very high levels. Self-evaluation is rigorous and effective, showing that the school has a good capacity for further improvement. Given the good outcomes for the pupils and the skilful management of the budget, the school provides good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

**Grade: 1**

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Improve standards and progress in mathematics to bring them in line with the achievements in other subjects.
- Extend the provision for gifted, able and talented pupils to give them even more opportunities to excel.

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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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
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?	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?	2
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?	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	1
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	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

23 November 2007

Dear Children,

Inspection of Ashwell Primary School, Ashwell, Baldock SG7 5QL

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school. I really enjoyed my visit and would like to share with you what I thought about your school.

You go to a good school. I was particularly impressed by the way that everybody gets on so well together. I could see that you all take very good care of each other. As one of your parents said, 'happy pupils and happy staff make a happy school.'

I thought that your contribution to making Ashwell a good school was great and that the ideas you have put forward through the school council are excellent. I was also impressed by the many jobs Year 6 pupils do, particularly the way they help to look after the younger children.

I could see that there is a lot for you all to do. All those opportunities you have to make music, play sports, take part in drama and art activities and to learn a foreign language are excellent. However, I did pass on your views to Mr Jenkinson that Year 6 in particular would like more opportunities to learn another language.

I was very pleased to see that the standard of your work is so high. It was clear to me that you try hard. I think that some of your writing is amongst some of the best I have seen. However, I noticed that, although your work in maths is good, it is not as outstanding as your work in English. I would like your teachers to try to find ways to help you achieve just as well in this subject.

When I was talking to your teachers, I could easily see where you get your enthusiasm for learning. They have so many good ideas! One that I would really like them to pursue is to offer you even more opportunities to excel at some special pieces of work that match your individual gifts and talents.

Finally, I must mention the wonderful Foundation Stage classes. Many of your parents wrote about how good they are, saying things, like 'my daughter has blossomed,' 'great start,' 'my son loves it.' What a marvellous start to your school.

Thank you once again for your warm welcome.

All the best for the future.

Roger Brown Lead inspector