

Ashwood Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103818
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	323903
Inspection dates	12–13 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Jacqueline Wordsworth HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	391
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Jones
Headteacher	Michael Ullah
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bells Lane Wordsley Stourbridge DY8 5DJ
Telephone number	01384 818545
Fax number	01384 818546

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashwood Park Primary School is a larger than average sized primary school that draws its pupils from socially and economically diverse backgrounds. A lower than average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, with very few pupils at an early stage of learning English. The school's unit for hearing-impaired pupils draws from a wide area and accounts for the above average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. However, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average overall, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision, wrap-around care, and before and after-school clubs all managed by the governing body. These were inspected at the same time as the main school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that pupils make good progress because they are regularly and accurately assessed and this information is used effectively to plan for their next steps in learning. This rigour of knowing exactly where pupils are in their learning and what they need to learn next is not mirrored in Years 1 and 2. Consequently, the good progress seen in Nursery and Reception classes is not built on in Key Stage 1. Here expectations of what pupils know and can do are not as high and as a result, standards and pupils' progress have begun to decline. Pupils' current standards in Key Stage 1 are average reflecting broadly satisfactory achievement. This decline continues into Key Stage 2 where a significant proportion of pupils, particularly, those with previous higher levels of attainment fall behind in their work and make inadequate progress. This is most noticeable in writing and mathematics. School records show that there are times when pupils' progress accelerates, for example in the current Year 6, but not rapidly enough to make up for the legacy of underachievement. Crucially, there are significant examples of pupils' progress standing still or, worse, regressing.

While many pupils attain average standards with some reaching standards above the levels expected for their age, current standards vary far too much overall, and in some year groups are well below average, particularly in Years 3 and 4. By the time pupils leave the school their achievement is inadequate. This is because teaching and learning are inadequate. There is not enough good teaching across all year groups and subjects to accelerate pupils' progress to the point where they reach higher standards. Teachers fail to take adequate account of the information gained from assessment activities or their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment to pitch their lessons with sufficient precision to challenge all pupils. Much of the school's assessment data is confusing and staff find it difficult to follow. Consequently, senior leaders have not responded rapidly enough to pinpoint the progress made by individuals or groups of pupils so as to quickly identify and act upon underachievement.

Leadership and management are inadequate because monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are not focused enough to secure swift improvement. The school improvement plan lacks precision and a clear sense of how to move the school forward. As a result, expectations for improvement are not high enough and systems to secure greater consistency in teaching and learning are ineffective with little use made of challenging targets. Although school leaders monitor teaching and learning, this has not proved to be successful in raising standards because it does not focus on what pupils have learned. Consequently the school is not providing its pupils with the education they deserve and pupils are not attaining the standards of which they are capable.

Pupils' good personal development means they behave well and enjoy coming to school, which is reflected in their above average attendance. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is generally broad and balanced, with a good range of extra-curricular activities. The quality of care, support and guidance for the pupils is satisfactory. Pastoral support is good although

academic guidance, including marking, is unsatisfactory because pupils are currently unaware of how they can improve their work, or how to take the next steps in their learning.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter school with skills, knowledge and understanding typical of those expected for their age. Children respond well to the routines established by the staff with confident and considerate behaviour. They work well with each other, both during learning tasks and during their structured play activities. Effective use is made of the outdoor area as well as the classroom to promote learning. It is well equipped to enable children to develop their motor and sensory skills using big apparatus. Teachers plan engaging learning activities that enable children to make good progress in the development of their personal and social skills, providing a good balance between child-centred and adult-led activities. Phonics are taught systematically and children are given good opportunities to write from first-hand experience.

Children are keen to learn and they behave well. All staff are skilled practitioners who understand the principles of good early years learning and development. Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of all pupils and maintain thorough records of their progress. Further key strengths are the good leadership and management and the planning of an activity-based curriculum. Children learn in a stimulating and inclusive environment, which is well matched to their needs and reflects good early years practice.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement, particularly in writing and mathematics at Key Stage 2, by frequently checking the rate of progress for all groups of pupils through clearly recorded data.
- Remove the inadequate teaching and raise the proportion of good teaching by improving teachers' use of assessment information in lessons so that they are able to challenge all pupils to do their best, particularly those who are more able.
- Give better guidance to pupils by making more effective use of marking and targets to enable pupils to know exactly what they have to do to improve.
- Set a clear direction for the school that focuses on improvements to achievement and quality of teaching by strengthening the role of all leaders and holding all staff accountable for pupils' progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

National assessment tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2008 showed standards to be above average in science, broadly average in mathematics and below average in English. This group of pupils had reached just above average standards at the end of Key Stage 1. Though their progress in science was satisfactory it was inadequate in other areas. Lower attaining pupils made satisfactory progress but others underachieved. The 2007 results indicate progress was of a similar pattern. At Key Stage 1, attainment had been significantly above average in reading and writing for several years until 2007 and above average in 2007 in mathematics. It fell to a little below average in 2008.

School records indicate that pupils in the current Year 6 entered Key Stage 2 with well above average standards, inspection evidence shows that only 39% of pupils have progressed two levels in English and mathematics.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress. Those in the hearing-impaired unit receive effective support that enables them to participate as much as possible with their peers in the main school. Parents greatly appreciate the extra help given to their children.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupil relationships with peers and teachers are good and lead to classrooms being calm and friendly places in which to learn. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of considering the needs of others. Many enthusiastically learn to sign so that they can communicate with pupils in the hearing-impaired unit. As a result, pupils in the unit feel fully involved in the life of the school and this boosts their morale and self-esteem. Those individuals who are members of the school council regard it as a great privilege and relish the responsibility. The membership of the school council ensures that pupils of all interests and abilities are represented in decision-making. As a result, all groups of pupils make a good positive contribution to the development of their school community. They have good understanding of how to be healthy as demonstrated by their healthy food choices at lunchtime and their willingness to participate in sport. Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are keen to learn even when their work is too easy or too hard. When they are interested and challenged by their lessons they show real enjoyment and enthusiasm.

Spiritual, moral and social awareness is an important strength, with pupils acquiring a wide range of social skills that help them to develop into well-rounded individuals. However, there are limited opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident that any worries or troubles will be dealt with effectively because adults are sensitive to their needs.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Despite some good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage, teaching overall is having insufficient impact on raising pupils' achievement and standards at a fast enough rate, particularly in Key Stage 2. For example in English and mathematics, teachers often miss opportunities to probe the pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Too much of the pupils' work is undemanding and lessons are generally unexciting. The use of open-ended questioning is weak. There is too much emphasis on drawing out their factual knowledge as opposed to encouraging them to question ideas or discuss opinions to extend their understanding. There are significant weaknesses in teachers' lesson planning. As a result, much of the pupils' work is pitched at the same level of difficulty regardless of pupils' different levels of competency. The majority of pupils are unclear about what they are expected to learn and do not understand how their learning will be measured during the lesson. Although lessons seen had a learning objective, these were often not sufficiently precise to give pupils a clear view.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school takes many opportunities to enrich the curriculum. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs that help to enrich the work in lessons. Links between subjects are developing with the introduction of a thematic curriculum but there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy, mathematics, and information and communication technology skills in other subjects. The programme for pupils in the before and after-school clubs further supports pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care is central to the school's ethos. Consequently, staff look after pupils well, including those who access the wrap-around care, and the before and after-school clubs. This is reflected in the positive relationships enjoyed between adults and pupils. Those pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties and/or have a disability receive good support, particularly those pupils who are part of the resource base for hearing-impaired children. Here good leadership has forged strong links with outside agencies, such as the educational psychologist and speech and language therapists. This ensures that extra help for individual pupils is available, as required. Teaching assistants play an important role in providing extra well-targeted support for these pupils. The school's particular strength is the partnership it builds with parents and the way in which other services are involved in supporting pupils in need. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to ensure that pupils are adequately safeguarded, that their health and safety are secure, and that all procedures meet current government requirements. The staff are fully aware of child protection arrangements, so they are aware of the steps to take if they have concerns about the well-being of a pupil.

The guidance that pupils receive through teachers' marking is inadequate overall. While some pupils are receiving valuable feedback on how well they are doing and advice on what they need to do to improve, overall it is not giving enough guidance to help pupils know what they need to do next to improve their work. Teachers place too much emphasis on praiseworthy comments without focusing on evaluating the work against the learning objectives.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

The school's self-evaluation is too generous as it focuses on what the school is doing rather than assessing and analysing the impact of interventions on the outcomes for pupils. Senior leaders are not rigorous enough in checking the effectiveness of provision or the progress of pupils. Their evaluation is not thorough enough to provide clear evidence that new initiatives are working. The analysis of assessment information is not accurate enough to help staff track the pupils' progress and achievement with sufficient certainty. Middle leaders do not focus enough on measuring how any of the changes they make to the curriculum or teaching affect pupils' learning. Subject leadership is inadequate because the weak monitoring activities mean that leaders do not know where strengths and weaknesses lie in their subjects nor fully understand how much progress pupils make across the school. The school has introduced a training programme for staff in two-year groups designed to increase their knowledge and

understanding of better ways to teach writing. However, this is a recent initiative and is not widespread enough to have had a discernable impact on standards across the school.

Governors support the school well but their role in holding the school to account for its performance is restricted because they are too reliant on information provided by the school and do not check out for themselves what is happening. As a result, they are not yet in a position to evaluate the performance of the school effectively. The school is a cohesive and harmonious community where the leaders are aware of the diversity of the intake, appropriately promote equality and have taken some limited steps to broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world through their work on community cohesion. Parents are supportive of the school. Nonetheless, the inspectors took note of a very small minority of strongly expressed parental concerns on a number of issues including behaviour. Inspectors examined relevant records and balanced these against what the pupils thought and what the inspectors observed during their visit.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which 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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	4
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?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	4
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

14 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashwood Park Primary School, Wordsley, DY8 5DJ

Thank you very much for being so welcoming and friendly towards us during our recent visit to your school. We very much enjoyed the opportunity to talk with you and your teachers about how well you are doing. We found there are some good things about the school, such as your personal development and the way the youngest children are taught. All of you behave well and learn to be kind and considerate to each other. In lessons, we think you try to listen carefully to what your teachers have to tell you. The school council works hard for you. However, the school has some things it needs to improve, and we want it to improve as quickly as it can. The school needs extra support to help you to make the best possible progress. Other inspectors will visit the school to check how well it is doing, and in the meantime, we have asked the headteacher and the staff to do a number of things to make it better.

We know that sometimes your work is too easy so you do not learn as much as you should. As a result many of you are not making enough progress, particularly in the most important subjects of English and mathematics. We know that your teachers look after you and listen to what you have to say. They work hard to help you learn but you would do better if everyone were given work at the right level. We have asked those adults with responsibility for subjects to check very carefully how well you are doing, so that they plan the right work for you to do next. We have also asked those in charge of the school to keep a closer eye on what the school does, especially to make sure that everyone knows how much progress you are making. Finally, we have asked teachers to make sure you know what you are aiming for in a lesson and how to improve.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all you do. All my best wishes for the future and I hope you continue to enjoy your learning and being kind to others.

Yours faithfully

Jacqueline Wordsworth

Her Majesty's Inspector