

Ashley Down Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108911
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	324862
Inspection dates	14–15 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Martin James

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	173
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	Patrick Cummings
Headteacher	Helen Heap
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Olveston Road Horfield Bristol BS7 9PE
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashley Down Infant School is smaller than most other primary schools. A large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, and a small minority are from minority ethnic backgrounds and are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly higher than that found nationally, whilst the proportion of those with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average. The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two Reception classes. In recognition of its work, the school has received the Healthy School, Activemark and Investors in People awards.

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 where pupils make exceptional progress. The secret of the school's success is its highly effective leadership and management. The headteacher and other senior members of staff, ably supported by the governors, are a dedicated and passionate team, who are committed to doing the very best they can for their pupils. Self-evaluation is very effective in pinpointing where improvement is needed to move the school forward. Very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Staff now rightly recognise that target setting and marking are in need of further development, so that they give pupils clearer guidance on how they can improve their work.

Standards are high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. When children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills are below the levels expected for their age. During their time in Reception the children achieve exceptionally well, reaching above average standards by the time they leave. Pupils continue to achieve extremely well in Years 1 and 2, with the result that standards at the end of Year 2 are high.

Excellent teaching is a key factor in pupils' exceptional progress. Relationships are outstanding, and teachers make very good use of a variety of resources and strategies to make lessons interesting. Lessons are skilfully planned to meet the needs of different pupils. Teachers have the highest expectations of their pupils and continually challenge them in the work they provide. Teaching assistants are also very carefully deployed in supporting all pupils, especially those with learning difficulties and/or difficulties. The curriculum is extremely interesting and varied, and staff have successfully developed an approach to learning that is both innovative and challenging. It contributes exceptionally well to both pupils' enjoyment of school and to their learning. Pupils' personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are outstanding. They have very positive attitudes to learning because classrooms are stimulating and high quality work is celebrated. Further, pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Whilst care, guidance and support are good overall, pastoral care is outstanding, with the care and safety of its pupils being a priority of the school. Parents hold very positive views about the school, and one said typically, 'We consider ourselves fortunate that our children have been able attend this school.' Another added, 'This is a fantastic school.'

Recent improvements and those made since the previous inspection, the high quality of the current provision and the excellent progress being made by pupils show that the school has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make exceptional progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage because the teaching is excellent. The children are happy in school; they enjoy themselves and their behaviour is extremely good. The staff work hard to create a friendly and very caring learning environment, with the welfare of the children being rigorously ensured. The children also benefit from the very close links that the school establishes with parents. Adults provide the children with a very good balance between teacher-led activities and chances for them to choose their tasks for themselves, and they take every opportunity to help children develop both their knowledge and skills. For instance, adults continually talk to the children to help develop their language skills. A very wide range of resources is available, with the outdoor area being used particularly

well to support learning in all aspects of the curriculum. The leader is highly enthusiastic and uses her specialist knowledge very well in making outstanding provision for the children and their varying needs. Other staff members give her strong support in providing for those needs.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that marking and target setting help all pupils understand clearly how to improve their work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are high and pupils' achievement is outstanding. Children get off to an exceptionally good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and by the end of the year they reach above average standards. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to achieve extremely well, and by the end of Year 2, standards are high. In 2008 pupils performed slightly less well in reading than in the other subjects. The school quickly identified this weakness and, through carefully targeted support, the issue has been successfully addressed. Outstanding provision is made for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and this enables them to make rapid progress towards their targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development is outstanding, and is based firmly on the school's high quality provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' excellent attitudes and behaviour, and their great enthusiasm for learning, are important reasons why they achieve so very well. They are courteous and polite to each other and to adults. Pupils play happily together and they say that bullying is not a problem. Consequently, they feel both very safe and well cared for in school. Pupils love coming to school, as shown by their good attendance. Pupils use their initiative very well when carrying out responsible jobs, and the school council, for example, has been very active in helping to provide a quiet area for pupils to enjoy. The eco-council members are proud of their work in relation to recycling. Pupils also raise money for charities, and they are regularly involved in a wide range of activities in both the local area and the wider area of Bristol. Pupils are particularly pleased with their involvement in 'Bristol in Bloom'.

Pupils have an exceptional understanding of the need for healthy lifestyles. Pupils readily eat fruit and healthy meals and they benefit greatly from the many opportunities provided for physical activity, such as 'Wake Up Shake Up'. The school very successfully develops in its pupils a range of personal skills, such as independence and confidence, and the excellent progress that pupils make in literacy and numeracy prepares them exceptionally well for their next stage of education, and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teachers provide very interesting lessons for pupils, using a wide variety of strategies and based on excellent subject knowledge. One pupil reported that, 'Our teacher is really enthusiastic!' and this is true of all the staff. Teachers and teaching assistants have very high expectations

of their pupils, and they consistently capture their interest and imagination. Assessment information is used very well to identify the needs of different groups of pupils and, as a result, each is provided with suitably challenging work. Further, whenever possible, work is personalised to suit individual needs. Clear instruction and explanation are provided, often with very good use being made of interactive whiteboards. Relationships are a particular strength, with pupils readily turning to the adults to discuss their work and clarify any problems. Lessons are comprehensively planned, with an impressive array of resources to support learning. Pupils show great enthusiasm in what they do. They have high expectations of their own work, which shows not only high standards of knowledge and understanding but also neat and careful presentation. This work is regularly celebrated in class, when pupils are generous in their appreciation of other pupils' effort and achievement.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is rich and innovative, and extremely thoughtfully developed by the staff. It enables pupils to study a broad and very interesting range of subjects, topics and themes, for example, 'Amazing Animals', and this contributes very significantly to their outstanding progress. Pupils say they really enjoy the work provided, and they particularly value 'Discovery Time', when they can undertake projects of their own. Some parents report that their children readily and enthusiastically continue this work at home. There is a good emphasis on the use of the school's attractive grounds, as well as the wider area around the school. Helpful links are routinely made between subjects. A particular emphasis has been placed on the use of literacy and numeracy in other subjects, to provide pupils with every opportunity to raise the standard of their work in these subjects. The use of information and communication technology has improved significantly since the time of the previous inspection. Learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very carefully identified, and these pupils are provided with an excellent range of tasks and activities.

There is an exceptional emphasis throughout the school on developing pupils' personal and social skills, and the curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. The curriculum is used very effectively to help pupils learn about, and appreciate, people who come from different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. There is an outstanding range of outings, visitors and after-school clubs, which pupils much appreciate and which they support with enthusiasm.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The exceptional pastoral care provided for pupils contributes significantly to their enjoyment and their learning. Procedures for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are rigorously enforced. External agencies are very well used to support any vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Child protection procedures are firmly in place, and all staff are alert to signs that any pupil might be anxious or distressed. Very effective arrangements are in place to ensure the smooth entry of pupils into the school, as well as into the junior school when they leave. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the good work of the staff, and they greatly value the caring approach of the school towards their children. Staff ensure that pupils work in a safe, secure and clean environment. Pupils are taught extensively about the importance of healthy living, and they are regularly reminded about the need to take care, for instance when using computers.

Teachers provide very clear advice to pupils in class about their work. Pupils also have targets for improving their work, but discussions with them suggest that, whilst some know them well, others are less sure. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly, and they always add words of praise and encouragement. However, advice on how pupils might improve their work further is less frequent.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher leads the school with dedication, commitment and skill, and she receives first-class support from other senior staff members. The sharing of roles and responsibilities is done particularly well. Staff are dedicated to making the best possible provision for pupils, especially to help them achieve as well as they can. Staff have been successful in creating a very caring and happy environment, and great care is also taken to ensure that no form of discrimination is evident in the school. The school's self-review has been accurate in identifying strengths and areas for development, including its current focus on ensuring that targets and marking help pupils understand clearly how to improve their work. Community cohesion and pupils' understanding of cultural diversity are developed extremely well. There are very strong community links both in school and locally, and the school has successfully enhanced these through links that have been established with schools in other areas of Great Britain, as well as with people in, for example, Africa. These links have very significantly raised pupils' awareness of the lives of others.

Subject leaders demonstrate a very secure understanding of their various subjects, and they have actively supported strategies for making improvements. The high standards now being achieved illustrate this well. Governance is outstanding, with the governors being fully involved, for example, in producing the school's self-evaluation form and its improvement plan. Consequently, they have made a very significant contribution to the exceptional provision being made by the school, and, when appropriate, they readily exercise their role of 'critical friends'.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
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 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?	2

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

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

16 May 2009

Dear Pupils,

Ashley Down Infant School, Bristol BS7 9PE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We enjoyed our visit and it was a pleasure talking to you. My colleague especially liked talking to the school council, and we both really enjoyed joining you in assembly. I am writing to tell you what we found out about the school. Overall, you are in an outstanding school, where you are doing exceptionally well with your work.

These things are some of the strengths of the school:

- Teaching is excellent, and you have really interesting and informative lessons.
- You get an outstanding start to school in Reception.
- Your behaviour and your attitudes to your work are excellent.
- You really enjoy the wide range of activities that the school provides, both in lessons and through visits and different clubs, such as gardening club.
- You know about how important it is to eat healthy food and take exercise.
- The staff know you very well and take very great care of you.
- Your parents are very pleased with the school.

This is what the school has been asked to improve:

- Make sure that the targets you have, and the comments teachers add when marking your books, help you understand clearly how to improve your work.

You can help, too, by making sure you know how to make your work even better.

We wish you all good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Martin James

Lead Inspector