

Ashton St Peter's CofE VA School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109703
Local Authority	Bedfordshire
Inspection number	325010
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	153
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	30
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cecile Coudert
Headteacher	Mrs Shirley McGinty
Date of previous school inspection	10 October 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Leighton Court Dunstable Bedfordshire LU6 1EW
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Ashton St Peter's is smaller than most primary schools and is heavily over-subscribed. It serves the whole of Dunstable and has no designated catchment area due to its voluntary aided status. The school moved into new buildings in September 2006 and a new headteacher was appointed at that time.

Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds and there are no pupils at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are taught in the Reception class and all children enter in September each year. The school has gained the Healthy Schools and Sports Activemark awards.

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 where pupils achieve well and get a good start to their education. Pupils are happy at school. 'It is friendly and we always have someone to go to if we need,' said a member of the school council. Parents are almost unanimous in their support and are pleased to have chosen the school for their children. The parent who wrote, 'My daughter loves going to school and goes from strength to strength in her learning and she enjoys all aspects of school life because everyone is caring', echoed the views of many.

Pupils make good progress because the staff know them well and try hard to meet their different learning needs. Most children start the Reception year with skills that are above those typically found. They make good progress in all areas of learning and reach standards that are high when they enter Year 1. Progress continues to be good and standards at the end of Year 2 are exceptionally high in reading and writing and are high in mathematics. There has been a significant improvement since the previous inspection and pupils reach standards that are exceptionally high in comparison with national expectations when they leave at the end of Year 4, although they are not quite as high in mathematics as in English.

Good teaching and a well-organised curriculum mean that pupils enjoy lessons and learning. Teachers are skilled in managing their behaviour and ensure that their classrooms present a calm and orderly learning atmosphere in which relationships are very good. They ensure that pupils are clear about what has to be learned. However, staff do not always help pupils to understand the success criteria, or what constitutes a successful outcome at the end of the lesson. Furthermore, pupils do not have a clear understanding of their targets, particularly in mathematics. Because teachers are supportive and provide a good range of activities, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities also make good progress. Their learning is aided by the good quality support that is given to them in class by the teaching assistants.

Very good attention is paid to pastoral care and the well-being of pupils. This helps them to feel safe and secure in their surroundings so they develop well as individuals. Pupils' interests and talents are fostered well by the good range of opportunities beyond the classroom, mainly in the areas of sport, music and the arts.

The school's across-the-board improvements since the previous inspection did not happen by chance. The leadership and management of the new headteacher is outstanding and she is already much admired by governors, parents, staff and pupils. She has successfully built on the strengths found at the previous inspection and has a determination to see the school improve further. There is a clear focus on raising achievement and standards, and on appropriate staff development. Improvements in the use of tracking data to target support for pupils more closely has, for example, led to a quickening of progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, although the school has an accurate picture of its provision and standards, as yet, not all subject leaders are involved enough in the evaluation process. Nevertheless, the improvements made demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision and learning in the EYFS are good. There are some outstanding elements, such as the environment for learning. Children learn well in the supportive and caring atmosphere. Staff have worked hard to ensure that the requirements of the recently introduced EYFS

framework are being met. Children thrive in the exciting and stimulating environment under watchful and caring eyes. Carefully planned activities give children opportunities to explore and develop their own games and interests so that they grow in independence and learn through play. The balance of activities led by staff or chosen by the children is good. The excellent environment both inside and outside is freely accessible and arranged to promote further learning in all areas. Skilful teaching encourages children to develop a love of learning and this is reflected in the good progress they make from when they start school. Many parents commented positively on how well their children settle. Many good arrangements are made to ensure that children feel safe and secure from when they start. This includes the successful home visits programme. In addition, parents are welcomed as partners in their children's learning and the school makes provision to help parents develop their child's skills and knowledge. This includes the recent session for parents to show them how to foster their children's mathematical development.

Staff undertake careful observations and assessments in order to plan future steps in learning and every child is helped to enjoy and achieve in whatever they do. The welfare of the children is promoted well and they develop social and communication skills which will enhance their future learning. The effective early years' provision is well managed and led, and there is close teamwork.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of their long-term targets and the lesson success criteria, in order that they know what to do in order to meet them.
- Strengthen the role of subject leaders in checking provision and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Because the quality of teaching and learning is good, pupils achieve well, making good progress from their above average starting points. By the end of Years 2 and 4, standards are exceptionally high in comparison with national expectations. In mathematics throughout the school, staff are aware of a need to strengthen pupils' calculation and problem-solving skills. A good improvement programme has been put into place to address this, with indications that progress in mathematics is strengthening. Current Year 4 pupils are on track to attain standards that are as high as in previous years, although the targets for the end of the year in mathematics are still slightly below those in English.

The school is making good use of tracking data to pinpoint the progress of different groups of pupils, including those who have moderate learning difficulties. Consequently, pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with activities that match their learning needs well, and their progress matches that of their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The pupils' social, moral and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is outstanding, strongly fostered by the programme to promote educational values. Pupils have a good understanding of what they should do to stay healthy because the curriculum includes a good emphasis on these areas as well as the range of extra-curricular sports and activities.

Pupils are sensible and safety conscious as they go around the building. They say that they thoroughly enjoy being at school and are appreciative of all the positive things it gives them. This is reflected in their good attendance, although a few families continue to take their children on holiday during term time.

The behaviour of the pupils is good. They enjoy contributing to the running of the school by adopting roles as monitors and, for example, taking responsibility for new pupils through the 'buddy' system. They are aware of the need to protect the environment, and understand about recycling and the use of the compost bin for their fruit peelings. Pupils' good personal skills as well as their skills in English and mathematics ensure that they are well prepared for their move to the middle school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers use assessments to ensure that work is matched effectively to pupils learning needs. They know how to interest and motivate their pupils and the strong positive ethos in the classrooms gives pupils' confidence and helps their self-esteem. In all classes, teachers make good use of other adults to support groups of pupils of different abilities. This means, for example, that lower ability groups can keep up and more able pupils can forge ahead. When teaching is outstanding, teachers ensure that pupils know not only what they are learning, but also what they need to do to meet the aims of the lesson. However, this is not consistently the case and pupils do not have a sufficiently clear understanding of how to meet their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and well-balanced and provides a good range of activities. In addition, well developed links between subjects add interest and enjoyment to the curriculum. However, more could be done to ensure that literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are consistently planned into the topics. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of additional activities, including interesting visits which help to enrich learning. Particular themed weeks also enliven learning. For example, the recent 'World Awareness Week' not only gave pupils opportunities to learn about other cultures and faiths, it also provided a good focus for whole-school activity, thereby promoting community cohesion. In addition, enrichment days, such as the recent 'Three Billy Goats Gruff' day enables pupils of all age groups to work together.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Staff are fully committed to promoting the welfare and health of the pupils. Robust procedures for safeguarding are in place and staff training is comprehensive. The school, in partnership with the education welfare officer, is working hard to improve attendance and reduce absence. Pastoral support is excellent. Pupils say that they feel safe and secure and know who to go to if they experience a problem. The staggered entry to school over a fifteen minute period in the morning makes the start of the day calm and well ordered. There have been significant improvements in the arrangements for tracking the progress of all pupils. These are now strong,

particularly in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics though they have yet to be extended to include science and ICT.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is led and managed well. The headteacher has made a very significant difference to the school's overall effectiveness. There is a very strong sense of teamwork fostered by senior staff, and a feeling of common purpose of improvement at all levels. Systems for self-review are established and enable the school to have a clear picture of areas that need improvement. This results in a high quality improvement plan prepared by the newly developed senior leadership team. Subject leaders are developing their ability to monitor and evaluate the school's provision or pupils' progress in their areas. There is a clear programme of training in place to address this weakness.

The governing body fulfils its duties and supports the school well. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and of their role. The school is outward looking and forward looking, reaching out into the community and promoting community cohesion well

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

12 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashton St Peter's C of E Primary School, Dunstable, LU6 1EW

Thank you so much for making us welcome and for talking with us when we visited your school. We enjoyed finding out about Ashton St Peter's. Please would you also thank your parents for returning the inspection questionnaires.

We agree with you and your parents that yours is a good school. You work hard and your achievement is good. The many displays of your work are enjoyable and show the wide variety of things that you are taught. The Remembrance Day celebrations were particularly impressive and it was very rewarding to see how well you understood the importance of this day. All the adults care for you very well and your teachers are skilful in helping you to learn. They plan interesting and exciting activities for you, and it is easy to understand why you enjoy lessons and learning.

Your good behaviour and the very positive attitudes you have towards each other are also impressive. You have a good understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Your headteacher and all the other adults involved in leading and managing your school do a good job.

We have asked your school to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that you know what your targets are and you know what you have to do to meet them. Secondly, for your teachers who have responsibilities for subjects to make sure that they check your progress in these subjects so that even more lessons are really good and help you to learn well.

Once again, thank you for your help. We know that the staff will help you to keep doing your best.

Yours sincerely

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector