

Ashbrook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110384
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	325142
Inspection date	12 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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)	175
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	Mr Michael Ockwell
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Newman
Date of previous school inspection	28 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The High Street Two Mile Ash Milton Keynes MK8 8NA
Telephone number	01908 561366
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school. They investigated: the school's evidence that pupils are making outstanding progress; the extent to which pupils' potentially excellent personal development is evident in practice; and the extent to which monitoring gives leaders an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. Evidence was gathered from the analysis of pupils' progress, scrutiny of their work, observation of lessons, parents' questionnaires, and discussions with the headteacher, staff, the chair of governors and pupils.

Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

About half of the pupils at this smaller than average infant school are of White British heritage. The remainder are from a wide range of backgrounds, the largest groups being those whose families have roots in India or Pakistan. The proportion at an early stage of learning English is well above that found in most schools. The most common home languages are Urdu, Punjabi and Gujarati. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average; most of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational need is below average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two classes. The school has the Basic Skills Quality Mark and Healthy School Status. Governors provide breakfast and after school clubs. The headteacher is also executive headteacher of another local school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the high-quality education provided for their children by this outstanding school. 'We are proud to have our child attend this school; she looks forward to every day' is typical of the many positive comments received from parents. There are many reasons why pupils achieve outstandingly well, but key to the school's success is a potent combination of excellent teaching, support and leadership, and pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes and behaviour.

The excellent headteacher, very well supported by staff and governors, provides a very clear and ambitious direction for the school's work that is firmly focused on its motto, 'Everyone matters; everyone is important'. Throughout the school, there is a strong sense of teamwork and a shared commitment to do the very best for each pupil. Most start school with skills that are typical of four-year-olds. However, the make-up of each year group varies from year to year and usually covers a broad range of ability and need. In addition, in most years, a large proportion of pupils are at an early stage of learning English. From the beginning, a very close check is kept on pupils' learning and welfare, so that pupils receive the right kind of help. As one parent put it, the school provides an 'excellent range of activities and support for less able pupils and those with special educational needs, right through to the very able and gifted children'. As a result of the close attention given to meeting their individual needs, most pupils, whatever their background, ability or familiarity with English, make excellent progress and they reach standards that are well above average. The results of the national assessments for Year 2 pupils in 2008 were closer to average, however, because many pupils in this year group had lower than usual starting points, but the provisional results for pupils currently in Year 2 show that standards are likely to return to well above average levels this year.

From their earliest days in school, pupils have a thirst for learning and an eagerness to do their best. They enjoy school immensely, in no small part because teachers ensure that it is lively, interesting and exciting. Much of the school, indoors and out, is visually stunning, very well resourced and used extremely well to promote enjoyment and learning. High-quality, vibrant displays not only celebrate pupils' achievements in a wide range of subjects, but are also used as a teaching resource to accelerate pupils' understanding. Pupils enjoy the practical nature of many lessons and several of those spoken to place science high on their list of favourite subjects. Teachers' planning is detailed and very explicit about what pupils are expected to learn and how the work will be modified to meet their differing needs. Lessons move at a very brisk pace and teachers use a wide range of strategies to capture pupils' imagination and extend and challenge them. The school has invested considerable time and effort in developing pupils' 'thinking skills' and this has had a considerable impact on their self-esteem, confidence and independence, and contributes to their high levels of achievement. Pupils are set precise targets for their learning and they have a mature understanding of what they need to do to achieve them. Outside of lessons, staff provide a very good range of extra-curricular activities that foster a love of school. Because they enjoy school so much, most pupils attend very well although, despite the school's efforts to promote good attendance and monitor absence, the rate of attendance fell in the past year. Even though the figures were above the national average, the school is determined that attendance should return to the previous high levels.

These high expectations pervade all of the school's work, with senior leaders and staff expecting much of themselves and the pupils in their care. Second best is never good enough and complacency is not tolerated. Pupils and staff rise to the challenge. Well-established, robust

and comprehensive assessment systems provide a wealth of information about pupils' progress. Senior leaders use this information very well to set challenging targets and to check for any patterns in the performance of specific groups of pupils. A wide range of national and school-devised strategies is used to provide a short boost or consolidate learning where necessary. These are backed up by careful assessments before and after the interventions to ensure they are having the desired impact. Pupils who are new to learning English are identified early and given the support they need, in and out of lessons. As a result, they soon gain confidence in using English and they make rapid progress in their all-round development. The talented teaching assistants make a very strong contribution to the learning and well-being of these pupils, and those who find learning difficult, and external expertise is used exceptionally well to complement what staff offer.

The school places just as much emphasis on promoting pupils' personal development as it does on their academic achievement. Consequently, they make excellent progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education. First and foremost, staff ensure that pupils are safe and secure, and this is much appreciated by pupils and parents. Health and safety procedures are very robust and a careful check is made on the suitability of adults to work with children. In line with all school activities, the breakfast and after school clubs are well organised, purposeful and enjoyable. Pupils have a very well-developed understanding of how to lead safe and healthy lives and they contribute very well to the school community and beyond. The school promotes community cohesion very well, and links with the Desai School in Nairobi help pupils to begin to understand the global dimension.

Rigorous and all-encompassing monitoring systems ensure that senior staff and governors know their school very well. Their sharp insight into what makes the school successful and what can be improved means that they have maintained the outstanding provision found in the school's last inspection. They are exceptionally well placed to continue to serve pupils and their families extremely well.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make an exceptionally good start to their education in a calm, supportive and vibrant environment. Relationships between children, and with the adults, are very positive and there is a buzz of purposeful activity. Excellent planning, teaching and leadership are the bedrock of the high-quality provision, and staff work tirelessly to improve what they offer. Teaching and support staff work very well together to provide a good balance of activities chosen by the children and those directed by an adult. Children enjoy everything that staff offer and take delight in sharing what they know and can do with visitors. The outdoor areas are attractive, well organised and used thoughtfully to promote a sense of adventure. Staff keep a close check on children's learning and development, and their assessments are used to build up helpful and informative 'learning journals'. Well-organised induction arrangements and very strong links with parents ensure that children settle in quickly. Those children who find learning difficult, and children who are new to learning English, are given very good support. As a result, children make excellent progress, whatever their starting point, so that most reach, and a good many exceed, the goals expected at the end of Reception.

What the school should do to improve further

- Work with parents to restore the rate of pupils' attendance to its previously high levels.

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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	2
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?	1

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**

25 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashbrook School, Milton Keynes, MK8 8NA

Thank you for being so friendly when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed our visit very much and were very pleased to be able to speak with some of you. You were very helpful and gave us lots of useful information about your school. I am writing to tell you what we found out.

Your teachers and lots of your parents think that you go to an excellent school, and we agree. Your school is outstanding because you are able to make excellent progress in everything you do. We were very impressed by what we saw when we visited classrooms and the playground. You learn very well because your teachers do an excellent job, explain things carefully and give you lots of interesting and exciting things to do. You play your part because you are keen to learn, behave very well and try your best at all times. Congratulations, and please keep it up! We could see that a lot is expected of you, but your teachers make sure you get the right kind of help, and also make sure there is harder work for those who find learning easy. This means that you are all given a chance to do your best. Your behaviour at playtimes is excellent, too, and this is one reason why you told us you feel safe in school and enjoy it so much.

Even though your school is excellent, your headteacher and the other adults want it to become even better. One of the things they are planning to do is to work with your parents to make sure everyone comes to school as often as possible. We agree that they should do this, and we are sure you will want to help, so that you can keep on learning really well. We wish you good luck for the future.

Yours faithfully

Keith Williams

Lead Inspector