

# Ashdene Primary School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	111227
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	325320
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

The inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	414
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs P Hooper
Headteacher	Mr K Wadcock
Date of previous school inspection	March 2006
School address	Thoresway Road Wilmslow SK9 6LJ
Telephone number	01625 531 118
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 20 part lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and the school improvement partner. They observed the school's work, looking at policies and plans for improvement, governors' minutes, monitoring and evaluation records, performance data and children's work. Inspectors also looked at the information from 163 parental, 32 staff and 344 children's questionnaires. At the time of the inspection, pupils in Year 5 were on a residential visit accompanied by staff from Years 5 and 6.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- The achievement of pupils and whether they are provided with equal opportunities to succeed in all aspects of school life.
- How effectively the school safeguards pupils' emotional health, safety and well-being.
- How well managers at all levels take into account and act upon the views of its stakeholders.
- How effectively the curriculum is used to develop pupils' skills to become self-confident, independent and well-motivated learners.

## Information about the school

This is a large primary school situated in the relatively affluent town of Wilmslow in Cheshire. Most pupils who attend the school have favourable home circumstances. A very small percentage of pupils are eligible for free school meals. A small but increasing proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a very small number of these are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below that found nationally. A very small proportion of these have a statement of special educational needs.

The school has achieved a number of awards which include the National Healthy Schools Standard, Eco Bronze and Silver Award, Active School Mark, the Inclusion Quality Mark and the Investors in People status. There is a pre-school and a before- and after-school club on site, but these are not managed by the governing body. This provision was inspected at the same time and a separate report is available on the Ofsted website.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

Ashdene is a good school. It has some outstanding features. Pupils make good progress in their learning, particularly in writing. Most join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding above that typical for 4 and 5 year olds and they get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception). Standards are high at the end of Year 2 and by the time pupils leave for secondary school, a large proportion have reached exceptionally high standards in the national standard assessment tests (SATs) in English, mathematics and science. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are courteous and keen to take an active part in all aspects of school life. They say they usually enjoy school, but some older pupils feel they do not have enough practical work in science and information and communication technology (ICT); inspectors agree. Parents' comments are generally supportive of the school: they particularly appreciate the improvements to communication via the email system.

The quality of teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and teachers have good relationships with pupils. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and the volume of work in their exercise books is impressive. However, the curriculum in subjects other than mathematics and English is not always well matched to pupils' knowledge and abilities. Sometimes there is insufficient challenge and links between subjects are not yet strong. Opportunities are missed to develop pupils' investigative skills in subjects like science and mathematics because there is a limited focus on practical work. For example, pupils are rarely required to apply the computation skills learnt in mathematics to solve challenging problems. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is managed well. The school works effectively in partnership with agencies to support children and families who experience difficulties.

The senior leadership team is well established. The headteacher and deputy headteacher know the school well. They set challenging targets for pupils and have successfully maintained very high standards for many years. Leadership has been strengthened recently by the appointment of two assistant headteachers, who bring additional skills to the school. Staff work together well and morale is good. Governors are aware of the strengths and relative weaknesses of the school and provide a good level of challenge. Since the last inspection, the school has successfully tackled the key issues for improvement. The consistency in high standards and pupils' good achievement, together with the improvements made to the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils' writing, demonstrate that the school continues to have a good capacity to sustain improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further

Improve the quality of the curriculum by:

- ensuring that sufficient opportunities exist for investigative and practical work, particularly in subjects such as science, mathematics and geography, checking that these are in place through work scrutiny and pupil interviews
- increasing the level of challenge by introducing more tasks which require pupils to work together independently to find solutions to problems and to find effective ways of sharing and presenting their ideas to their peers
- ensuring that work in all subjects builds on what pupils already know and what they need to learn.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2
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Pupils make good progress in their learning. From above average starting points they attain very high standards at the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in reading, writing, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers. However, pupils' progress across some aspects of the curriculum is slowed by a lack of consistently well planned opportunities to harness pupils' natural inquisitiveness, knowledge, skills and abilities.

Pupils say they enjoy school most of the time and their attendance is excellent. They have an excellent knowledge of how to keep fit and healthy and are very active on the large school grounds during break times. Pupils make excellent relationships with their peers. They are highly articulate and able to express their views cogently. They report that 'bullying is an endangered species' in school, because they have all taken part in an awareness raising week and are confident to approach staff if they need help. They have a strong sense of what is right and wrong in the school community and are working as 'eco warriors' to protect their local environment. But their understanding is less well developed with regard to global issues such as climate change and international citizenship. The school council is active and other pupils trust that it acts well on their behalf. Pupils contribute to the local community and raise significant sums of money for charities locally and internationally. However, their awareness of other UK communities is limited. The school has good quality plans in place to tackle this aspect of their learning.

The few pupils who are learning English as an additional language are making excellent progress. They feel included in the life of the school and make friends easily. All pupils are keen to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities and they understand and appreciate the need for competitive sports teams, although this does result in some pupils being more active than others. Pupils' high level literacy and numeracy skills means they are confident in their academic ability and well prepared for secondary education. However, some skills, such as using their initiative and working independently and in teams to investigate and unravel problems are less well developed.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

Inspectors observed a range of lessons across the curriculum. The majority were good, a few were outstanding and a similar proportion satisfactory. In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers explained the work clearly and set high expectations for achievement. Good use was made of talking partners, providing opportunities for these quick thinking pupils to express their ideas with dexterity. For example, in a writing lesson, pupils debated the type of language needed on a web page to attract visitors to Lakeside, the location of one of their residential visits. Pupils expressed ideas such as 'it needs to open the door to a new life' and discussed how to write persuasive texts in depth. Teachers were skilled at intervening where pupils needed individual support, were quick to pick up on any misconceptions in their learning and provided good guidance to the class to enable pupils to achieve well. Resources such as the interactive whiteboards were used imaginatively. Where teaching was satisfactory, the pace of the lesson was often too slow and resources less well matched to pupils' abilities. Teaching placed too much emphasis on reinforcing what the pupils already knew and extension work was more of the same rather than an activity with an increased level of challenge. Teaching assistants are well trained and provide effective support in lessons and on a one to one basis.

The curriculum has strengths in English, particularly in writing, and an appropriate amount of time is allocated to learning the basic skills in mathematics. Modern foreign languages are taught in Key Stages 1 and 2 and there are excellent enrichment activities, which include age appropriate residential visits across the school. However, some aspects of the curriculum are less well developed. Too little emphasis on investigation in subjects like science, mathematics and geography prevent pupils from being able to demonstrate their abilities and develop their enquiry skills. There is an over-reliance on worksheet based lessons. Few opportunities exist for pupils to work together to tackle problems, though some good examples of this take place on the residential visits. The school recognises the need to improve its curriculum and there is some good practice within the school which can be shared and extended. The guidance given to pupils in lessons is good.

<sup>1</sup>The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

Marking is of a consistently high quality in English, with comments which help pupils to improve their work. The quality of marking is less consistent in other subjects though there are pockets of excellent practice from which staff can learn.

The school provides a good level of care and support for its pupils. Parents appreciate the time staff give and their willingness to discuss any difficulties children may be experiencing. The school works effectively with other agencies to protect children's well-being. For example, a project on 'Stranger Danger' involving police and community workers was initiated by the school recently in response to a local incident. Parents are well informed through the school website and 'parent mail' is used effectively to ensure that communication is swift and appropriate to need. The school is quick to identify any vulnerable pupils and parents have commented on the quality of support provided for pupils new to the school, some who are overcoming significant barriers in their learning.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and deputy headteacher have complementary skills. They are committed to pupils reaching high standards and have successfully managed the improvements required by the last Ofsted inspection. Staff work well as a team and are appreciative of the measured approach the leadership has taken to implementing change. However, this has led to the slower development of leadership in subjects other than mathematics and English, which is impacting on the curriculum as a whole.

Governors are committed to the school and generous with their time. They know the school well, partly through their long service but also because they gather the views of parents, pupils and staff. Governance secures accountability effectively and governors recognise the aspects which need a sharper focus.

Partnership work is good. The Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) has provided good support for improving the English curriculum. The school has a good relationship with the on site pre-school and transition arrangements to secondary schools are good. The provision of a breakfast and after-school club on site is appreciated by working parents and enables all pupils to take a full part in all aspects of school life. The school works well with the local community. However, it recognises the need to extend pupils' knowledge of other communities within the United Kingdom to further develop community cohesion.

Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being are in place and meet the current statutory requirements. However, there is an aspect of

safeguarding identified by the school as needing some improvement and managers have good quality plans to complete action on this matter in the next few weeks.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children start in Reception with skills, knowledge and abilities that are above those typical for 4 and 5 year olds. They quickly understand the classroom routines and make excellent use of all the areas available to them. They make good progress and the majority leave Reception very well prepared for the National Curriculum in Year 1.

Children have continuous access to an extensive outdoor area which is used effectively. Here they become immersed in their learning through play. During the inspection it was raining, but the children found worms in the soil and investigated how they live. Adults guide children's learning well by sharing their knowledge and probing their understanding effectively. A good emphasis is placed on learning skills in early reading, writing and mathematics. An appropriate scheme of work enables the children to develop their reading, spelling and writing simultaneously, but some experience difficulties with their pencil grip, particularly the boys.

Reception is well led and managed. Children receive a good level of care and support, especially the few with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Relationships are good, planning meets the children's needs well and staff work effectively together. Accurate records of children's progress are updated regularly and staff collect a wealth of information to support their assessments. However, this is yet to be refined into a manageable system. Relationships with parents are good, but there is room to involve them further in their children's learning.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2



## Views of parents and carers

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashdene Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

Most parents are very positive about the school and their views are exemplified by comments such as 'The school has strong visible leadership', 'High standards are met which my child is motivated by', 'My child has flourished at Ashdene' and 'It is clear Ashdene is a listening school with importance placed on pupil well-being'. Less positive comments include concerns about the time spent on preparation for SATS, the lack of information parents receive about pupils' progress throughout the year, inconsistency in setting homework, a difference between Key Stage 1 and 2 with regard to the school's 'open door' policy and the lack of challenge for more able pupils. Inspection evidence supports some of these views, particularly with regard to the curriculum and the level of challenge provided within it. Some negative comments about provision for pupils with special educational needs were equally balanced by positive comments. Provision for these pupils is mentioned in the main body of the report.

The inspection team received 163 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 297 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall I am happy with my child's experience at this school	123	34	2	0

## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007/08, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007/08, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007/08, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007/08, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

19 June 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashdene Primary School, Wilmslow, SK9 6LJ

You may recall that I visited your school recently with Mr Griffin and Mr Lawrence to carry out an inspection. Thank you for sharing your views about your school with us and for completing the questionnaire. This letter is to explain what we found.

Ashdene provides you with a good quality of education. All the adults in the school have high expectations and you are taught well. You reach exceptionally high standards in your English, mathematics and science and are able to express yourselves very effectively. Your behaviour is excellent. You are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors and in lessons you focus well on your work. When you are working as 'talking partners' you listen exceptionally carefully. You told us that you enjoy your lessons most of the time, though some of you would like more challenging activities and practical work in subjects like science and ICT. We agree that this would improve the curriculum.

You appreciate the opportunity to go on residential visits. Those of you who returned from Ilam during the inspection reported that it was a very good trip, saying that you learnt to be independent and good walkers! You know how to keep fit and healthy and have a good understanding of helping others, both in your local community and through fundraising for international projects. You are proud of the work achieved by the school council, reporting that they represent your views well.

We have asked Mr Wadcock to make improvements to the curriculum. We would like to see more practical and investigative work in subjects like science, geography and mathematics. We would also like you to do more challenging teamwork to solve problems. You can help your teachers by continuing to work hard and letting them know if you have any special talents or knowledge which can be shared with the class so that you learn from each other.

I enjoyed my visit to your school and wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Gill Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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