

Ashbourne Hilltop Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112686
Local Authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	325661
Inspection date	6 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Alison Cogher

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	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	146
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	26
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Marion Merkens
Headteacher	Mrs Hazel Jaques
Date of previous school inspection	15 May 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wyaston Road Ashbourne Derbyshire DE6 1NB
Telephone number	01335 343041
Fax number	01335 343041

Age group	3–7
Inspection date	6 July 2009
Inspection number	325661

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following:

- the effectiveness of the school's provision in ensuring boys and girls achieve equally well in literacy and numeracy
- how well information and communication technology is used to support learning and raise achievement and standards
- the quality of the academic support and guidance provided for pupils.

Evidence was gathered from observing lessons, scrutinising school data, documents and pupils' work, and from parent questionnaires. Discussions were also held with staff, pupils, parents and governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not evaluated 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

This is a smaller than average sized school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the very small minority of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds only a very few are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. A below average proportion of pupils has learning difficulties and/or disabilities, although there is an average proportion with a statement of special educational needs. The difficulties these pupils have are varied and include autism, speech, language and communication difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage provision in Nursery and Reception classes. The school has achieved a number of awards in recognition of its work. These include the Anti-Bullying Award of Excellence and the Basic Skills Quality Mark Four, that the school has retained for ten years.

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. It works well with other schools, further education establishments, outside agencies and the community to enrich pupils' education and promote their well-being. The vast majority of parents are very supportive of the school: 'A lovely nurturing school which gives children a very happy introduction to the education system,' was typical of many comments they made. The partnership with parents is valued greatly by staff and governors and there is a strong shared commitment to improving it further. Parents are particularly appreciative of the focus on helping them to be involved in their children's learning through, for example, the sharing of curricular and assessment information. They also applaud efforts to further improve communication, such as the recently introduced system for text-messaging to inform them of events. There is a good sense of teamwork; everyone is valued and included.

Pupils achieve well. They make good progress each year as they build successfully on their learning. Children start in the Nursery with knowledge, understanding and skills that are typical for their age. They learn well and by the end of their Reception year almost all have reached, and over half have exceeded, the expected goals. They continue to learn well so that by the end of Year 2 they generally reach standards that are above average, and occasionally high, in reading, writing and mathematics. There was a slight dip to broadly average standards in 2008, but assessment information for this year indicates a return to the more typical above average standards. This improvement has been secured, in part, because teaching has been modified to take better account of the different needs of boys and girls. In addition, improved teaching of letter sounds, and increased opportunities for learning mathematics through practical activities, have contributed well to ensuring that boys and girls achieve equally well. Pupils who need extra help with learning and those with particular and, at times, very complex needs achieve as well as others because of the well-targeted support they receive. Similarly, pupils learning English as an additional language also achieve well because they are fully integrated into the school and supported effectively.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is above average and pupils' keenness to be at school reflects their enjoyment of learning. The Healthy School Award acknowledges pupils' good understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. They choose healthy-option foods at lunchtime and engage enthusiastically in physical exercise. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and take on roles of responsibility within the school community with a good deal of maturity for their age. Although boisterous at times, pupils' behaviour is generally good. They speak confidently about how well the 'playground friends' help to manage minor disputes, and are also quite clear about how and when talking to an adult would be the right action to take. Relationships throughout the school are good and contribute significantly to pupils' enthusiasm for school.

Teaching and learning are good overall although some inconsistencies are evident. Teachers have good subject knowledge and manage pupils well. Typically, lessons have clear objectives and good quality resources are used effectively to help pupils to learn well. Skilled teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' good progress in lessons. Effective use is made of information and communication technology, including interactive whiteboards, to engage pupils' attention and demonstrate teaching points. Pupils confidently use computers to aid their learning. Occasionally the pace of lessons slows and the expectation of what pupils of different abilities can achieve is not high enough. At these times, pupils do not work as hard

as they might as their motivation and enthusiasm wane. Assessment information is generally used well to guide the planning of lessons so that most of the time the vast majority of pupils make good progress towards the targets set for their class. Pupils know what these targets are in broad terms, but are much less clear about what they individually need to do to achieve them or how to improve their own work. Good relationships contribute to pupils' confidence and willingness to actively contribute to discussion. They have many opportunities to work together and they understand the importance of cooperation and mutual respect for each other's ideas. The good standards pupils reach, together with their well-developed social skills, ensure they are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

The good curriculum makes a significant contribution to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Links being developed between subjects are increasing the relevance of pupils' learning and providing good opportunities for them to explore their creativity through subjects such as music and art. Pupils are consulted about how improvements to the curriculum might be made and their suggestions are acted upon. For example, the purchase of an improved range of books that appeal to boys resulted in part from suggestions made by pupils. This has contributed well to the recent improvement in the standard of boys' reading. The school's Eco School Award recognises the quality of work undertaken by the school to help pupils understand the importance of caring for the environment. Visits and visitors are used well to enrich and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding in many aspects of their learning. For example, they make a valuable contribution to pupils' understanding of the different backgrounds, cultures and faiths present in communities other than their own. Links to a school in Romania and involvement in events in Ashbourne make a good contribution to pupils' awareness of global and local issues.

Care, guidance and support for all pupils, including those learning English as an additional language and those who need extra help with their learning, is good. It is often exemplary for the most vulnerable pupils at the school who typically have diverse and very complex individual needs. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements. Productive links with outside agencies ensure that pupils' individual needs are catered for well and also that their families are supported effectively. Pupils' progress is checked frequently to make sure they are on track to reach the targets set for them. Additional support is provided if they are not making the progress expected and this is largely successful. However, generally pupils are not aware of what they as individuals need to do to improve because they are not given this specific guidance either in lessons or when their work is marked. Consequently, they are not in a position to take some responsibility for their own learning.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is well supported by senior leadership staff. They provide effective guidance and support for subject leaders whose skills are developing well. This collaborative work has underpinned the improvements in standards this year. Governance is good. Governors, through their monitoring activities, have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further. They are mindful of the need to spend the school's budget wisely, for pupils' maximum benefit. Staff work well together to share expertise and are willing to embrace change to bring about improved learning opportunities for pupils. The school has good capacity to improve further, as demonstrated by the increase in standards this year and the good improvement made since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good leadership and management ensure that children get a good start to their education. Parents are appreciative of the warm and supportive environment that ensures their children settle quickly into the Nursery. Children enjoy each other's company and happily engage in activities. They make good progress and enter Reception as confident individuals who enjoy active learning. Teaching and the curriculum are good. Improved assessment procedures in the Nursery and Reception are providing accurate information about children's learning. This information is shared with parents and is generally used effectively to guide planning. Activities are well matched to children's age, ability and interests. The emphasis on learning through exploration and investigation is promoted well both indoors and outdoors. Activities stimulate children's curiosity and encourage them to work collaboratively while also supporting their independence. Children's personal and social development is good. Warm and trusting relationships and effective care and welfare procedures ensure children feel safe and secure. Children know what is expected of them and behave well. Early literacy and numeracy skills are taught well through a variety of practical games and tasks that children enjoy. Although some inconsistencies are evident, adult involvement in children's play often extends children's learning well. For example, when engaged in children's role play, adults broaden children's vocabulary and use of language through questioning and conversation. By the end of their Reception year most children reach or exceed the levels expected for their age and are well prepared for their work in Year 1.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide pupils with specific guidance so they understand how to improve their work.
- Improve the consistency of teaching so that the pace of lessons and expectations of what pupils can achieve are always high enough to ensure all pupils are attentive and motivated to work hard.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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	2
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**

7 July 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashbourne Hilltop Infant School, Ashbourne, DE6 1NB

Thank you very much for helping us with the inspection of your school. You made us feel very welcome and we were impressed with your friendliness and the way you enjoy each other's company. We were very glad to hear that you really like learning and being at school. Your school is a good school and we can see why you like it so much.

Here are some of the things we liked best about your school.

- Your headteacher, staff and governors work well together to make sure that you are helped to learn well.
- Adults take good care of you so you can feel safe at school. The care provided for those of you who need lots of extra help is particularly good.
- Teachers make your learning fun by planning a variety of activities and by arranging for you to go on visits and work with interesting visitors.
- You enjoy being active and eating healthy food.
- You contribute well to your school by taking on responsibilities such as being a playground friend or school councillor.
- By the time you leave Year 2 you have reached a good standard and are well prepared for the move to your next school.

To help make your school even better we have asked the adults to do two things.

- To make sure that you know exactly what you need to do to make your work better.
- To make sure that your lessons move along quickly and that you are always challenged to work hard.

You can help by always doing your best in lessons. Thank you once again for your help and we wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully,

Alison Cogher

Lead inspector