

# Askern Spa Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106673
<b>Local Authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	331276
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Lesley Clark

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	242
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr D Ridley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr R Leedale
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	28 April 2008
<b>School address</b>	Sutton Road Askern Doncaster South Yorkshire DN6 0AQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01302 700332
<b>Fax number</b>	01302 708832

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## Introduction

When Askern Spa Junior School was inspected in April 2008 it was given a Notice to Improve and asked to address issues related to achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science; consistency of teaching and pupils' progress across the school; and attendance. It was subsequently visited in December 2008 when it was judged to be making satisfactory progress.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average-sized junior school serves an ex-mining village to the north of Doncaster. An above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. Most pupils are White British. About 8% come from travelling families, including Romany, Gypsy and Irish heritages. A slightly above average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The number with a statement of special education needs is below average. The school has had many staffing difficulties over the past five years which has now stabilised. The headteacher was away on a residential visit with Year 6 pupils during the inspection.

The school has the Activemark Gold, Artsmark and Healthy School awards. It received a Space for Sports and Art grant and leads musical programmes and events across the county.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement. It has made good progress and is placed in a satisfactory position to continue to improve. The school gives all pupils a satisfactory education and has some good features.

Good support for pupils' welfare and well-being is a significant factor in pupils' good personal development. Pupils know how to stay safe and healthy and this is reflected in the external awards given to the school. Pupils work hard. They concentrate well in lessons, taking part enthusiastically and working harmoniously in pairs and in groups. Teaching quality has improved significantly since the last inspection. It is consistently good in all classes. As a result, pupils learn at a faster rate and are beginning to make up for lost time. A major strength is the effective marking which fully involves pupils in assessing their learning. This means that pupils recognise where they have made mistakes and understand what they need to do to improve their work.

Standards are steadily improving, with standards in mathematics close to average at the end of Year 6, as confirmed in the 2008 national tests. Standards in English and science are below average though the trend is upwards. The school exceeds its cautious targets and there is evidence of much good progress in lessons, especially in writing. More able pupils are progressing at a good rate because they get extra help and do challenging tasks. Average and less able learners make slower progress. This is because assessment is only just beginning to be used to pinpoint precisely where they are underachieving and what they need to learn next. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress because they get extra help in class and in additional literacy and numeracy lessons. Overall achievement is satisfactory from pupils' slightly below average starting points.

The curriculum is lively and interesting and successfully makes learning relevant for pupils. It offers lots of opportunities for pupils to be involved in music and sports activities. Pupils especially enjoy the many different after-school clubs and agree that teachers 'make learning fun'. A strength is the focus on speaking, listening and drama in lessons which is helping pupils to become more articulate in preparation for their future lives. Pupils are keen to learn and behave well. The school has taken a firm stand on attendance and introduced more robust systems to tackle persistent absenteeism. Attendance has gone up as a result and is close to average.

The school is satisfactorily led and managed and staffing is now stable. Self-evaluation is satisfactory, despite the accurate evaluation of strengths. The school overrates its effectiveness and is not focused on sustaining good achievement through setting increasingly challenging targets. However, actions taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning have been effective. Governance is good and governors hold the school fully to account for its actions. As a result, pupils' learning has improved considerably. Parents are generally satisfied with the work of the school. They would like to be more closely involved in their children's education and this is a valid point because there is not a strong two-way partnership at present.

### What the school should do to improve further

What the school should do to improve further

- Set more challenging targets so as to raise standards in English and science and build on the improved standards in mathematics.

- Use the information about the progress of different groups of pupils to accelerate the learning of average and less able learners.
- Improve communication with parents so parents can be more closely involved in their children's learning.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are below average but have shown improvement each year since 2007. Target setting is not as challenging as it should be, especially for average learners; for example, the school exceeded its targets by a considerable margin in mathematics in 2008 to reach close to average standards. Gifted, talented and more able pupils are beginning to forge ahead in English, mathematics and science because of teachers' higher expectations. As a result, more of these pupils now exceed expected levels. There is evidence of accelerated progress this year for all groups of pupils in reading and writing and in investigative work in all three subjects. Average and less able learners have yet to sustain this progress over time. Good support for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures they now make satisfactory progress. Pupils from travelling backgrounds make satisfactory progress because the school has good links with the traveller support service to ensure their needs are met.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Most pupils enjoy school, relishing the many different opportunities to be active and to take part in music, dance and sporting competitions. They are keen to do well, commenting, 'There's loads of hard work in maths!' They get on well with each other and with their teachers. Behaviour is good both in lessons and around the school. Pupils are lively and energetic, appreciating the need to be healthy and keep safe. The school council clearly represents pupils' views, organising water in classrooms 'to keep us hydrated'. Pupils are confident if there is any bullying, 'it gets dealt with quickly'. Newcomers to the school confirm, 'It's easy to make friends. There's always someone to talk to.' Attendance is now close to average and improving. Overall levels are affected by times taken out when pupils are travelling with their families. Pupils comment positively on the weekly attendance awards which have clearly had a big impact. Pupils make a good contribution to the local community through fundraising, history projects and putting on concerts. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are helpful, friendly and polite. They develop good self-esteem because the school helps them to understand themselves. These qualities together with their improving literacy and numeracy skills mean pupils are now satisfactorily prepared for their future lives.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Consistently good teaching quality across the school now ensures that pupils are learning better than previously. This has yet to have a full impact on pupils' achievement as they are making

up lost ground as well as learning new things. Teachers are skilled at managing behaviour and taking pupils' different learning styles into account. Pupils are clear about what they are expected to achieve in each lesson and indicate at the end how well they have understood. This ensures that pupils are attentive and focused on their learning. Teachers encourage pupils to put forward their ideas and opinions, creating lots of opportunities for pupils to speak and listen to each other through role-play or working in pairs or small groups. Pupils contribute with increasing confidence as they become more skilled. Teachers ask questions and set work that make pupils think. This is helping to accelerate the learning of more able pupils in particular. The extra help given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is proving effective but support for average and less able learners is less effectively targeted and so their learning is slower. In highly effective lessons, all pupils are challenged, as in a Year 5 English lesson where pupils explored a piece of text for hidden meanings in different ways appropriate to their ability.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum focuses appropriately on basic skills but places considerable emphasis on making learning fun, exciting and relevant so as to broaden pupils' cultural and personal experiences. Subjects are linked together as in the Year 5 'Space Camp Week' so as to bring learning alive and enhance pupils' enjoyment. Regular educational visits extend pupils' experiences as well as their understanding of their local heritage, for example listening to older members of the community and visiting the National Coal Mining Museum. There are a wide range of visitors to school including theatre groups, story tellers and artists. The curriculum is further enriched by residential visits for Years 4, 5 and 6, which make a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. Music is a strength, giving pupils the opportunity to learn a wide range of musical instruments to a good standard and take part in the flourishing choir. All pupils learn French. Gifted, talented and more able pupils produce a high quality termly magazine.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Rigorous procedures, which meet statutory requirements, are in place to safeguard pupils and promote their safety and well-being. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is effective. The learning mentor sees that the needs of vulnerable pupils are fully addressed. A key strength is the extent to which parents, pupils and staff evaluate the effectiveness of this support. While parents praise the pastoral care given by the school, some would appreciate improved communication channels between home and school, especially about their children's progress. The school has a welcoming open door policy to parents but has not considered the full range of ways to involve parents more in their children's learning. Good provision is made for more able, gifted and talented pupils with additional support to boost standards. The school tracks pupils' progress carefully but does not make best use of the information to target all groups of learners equally effectively. Marking is a strength. It clearly indicates to pupils how to improve their work as well as giving them regular opportunities to assess their own learning. Transition arrangements both into and out of school are well planned, and enable pupils to move schools with confidence.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher and other senior leaders have tackled the issues raised in the previous inspection well and this is beginning to raise standards for all groups of pupils, especially the more able. The school is beginning to track the progress of different groups of pupils more closely but does not yet use the information sufficiently well to fully address the gaps in average and less able pupils' learning. In part, leadership and management do not expect enough of these groups of pupils and so targets to reach nationally expected standards are cautious rather than ambitious. The lead given by the deputy headteacher supported by the assistant headteacher to improving teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment is excellent, leading to rising standards especially in mathematics, where progress outstripped the school's expectations. Stringent checking of teaching effectiveness coupled with expert guidance to teachers on how to improve their practice is paying dividends. Good governance provides the right balance of criticism and encouragement and has a firm influence on the school's drive for improvement. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to promoting equality and community cohesion, with notable strengths in its local links and the evaluation of its actions. National and international links are developing.

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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?	3
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	3

**Achievement and standards**

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 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

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	3
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	3

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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**

Inspection of Askern Spa Junior School, Doncaster, DN6 0AQ

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We very much enjoyed meeting so many of you and watching you learn. I should like to say a special thank you to the twelve children who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to us. A year ago your school was given a Notice to Improve. It has made good progress since then and lots of things have changed. Your school now gives you a satisfactory education and it has some good features. This is what your school does best:

- you are well taught, lessons are interesting and give you lots of times to act, talk and listen to each other. Marking is especially helpful, both your teachers' marking and yours. This is helping you to learn well, especially those of you who find learning easy
- you have a very interesting curriculum and learn many different things. Music and sport are clearly things your school does well
- you grow up into mature young people who concentrate well in lessons, work happily in groups or with a partner and are not afraid to ask questions when you are stuck
- your school takes good care of you and there are people like the learning mentor who are there to help you should you need it.

This is what your school needs to do next:

- it needs to expect a bit more of you so as to raise standards further so those in English and science are at least as good as in mathematics and to make mathematics even better
- those of you who find learning ok but not especially easy need a bit more help, especially to fill up the gaps in your learning so you can make faster progress
- lastly, the school should find more ways to involve your parents in your learning; they are keen to help.

You can help by attending school all the time so more of you get 100% attendance certificates.