

Ashcombe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109096
Local Authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	337215
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Shirley Billington

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pat Brown
Headteacher	Peter Turner
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors spent 12 hours looking at learning, visited 15 lessons, saw 15 teachers, sampled activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, observed small group teaching sessions and held meetings with staff, governors and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at samples of pupils' work and records of their progress, plans for school improvement, the outcomes of recent monitoring and evaluation activities, and questionnaires from all staff and pupils in Years 3 to 6. Two hundred and forty-four questionnaires completed by parents and carers were analysed.

An Ofsted administrative error resulted in the omission of one question in the parental questionnaire. Whilst this has not affected the overall outcome of the inspection it does mean that the parental response on the question 'The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example, changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)' is not recorded in the report.

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

- the impact of work being done to improve pupils' progress in Years 3 to 6
- the effectiveness of strategies to improve girls' achievement in mathematics and the achievement of boys in writing
- the arrangements made to support pupils with complex and/or particularly challenging difficulties.

Information about the school

This is a large primary school with two classes for each year group. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage with a small number from a variety of minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Most of these pupils have learning difficulties. Over the past two years there have been significant changes of teaching staff, with several temporary arrangements to cover long-term absences.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes based in a children's centre on the school site that is run by the local authority. A breakfast club and after-school provision are managed by the governing body.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

'A school with lots of enthusiasm and positive values' where 'families are actively involved in their children's school life'. Comments such as these summarise the high degree of satisfaction expressed by parents and carers who commend the approachability of staff and their concern for individual children. Their confidence is justified; a significant strength of the school is the strong pastoral care provided for all pupils. This, combined with an extensive programme of visits, visitors to school and extra-curricular activities, nurtures pupils and extends their experiences. As a result, pupils grow in confidence and develop good personal and social skills. The school is very responsive to the needs of families and the community. The provision of a breakfast club and after-school care enables parents to fit work commitments around the school day. The school is particularly successful in nurturing pupils who have a range of complex difficulties, often accommodating those who have struggled to benefit from earlier educational experiences. Individual support programmes and the work of learning mentors are instrumental in enabling these pupils to overcome significant barriers to learning. However, while care, guidance and support are good, there are weaknesses in the other aspects of the school's work that mean that pupils' achievement is only satisfactory.

Excellent leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children get off to a good start and make good progress in all areas of learning. In Years 1 to 6, while progress is satisfactory over time and attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average, there are differences in, and between, subjects. Pupils generally do well in science but their performance in English and mathematics shows significant variation and is at times below national averages. This has been, in part, the result of frequent staff changes. However, another factor that has contributed is that the school's systems for checking on pupils' progress have not been sufficiently rigorous. This has now been remedied with the introduction of regular pupil progress meetings so that the leadership team can accurately pinpoint where pupils are underachieving. This information is being used to target extra support where appropriate and also to make class teachers aware of where their teaching needs to be adjusted in order to address gaps or accelerate learning. This initiative is in the early stages but is already having an impact. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have identified where aspects of provision need refining in order to better meet learning needs, for example by extending opportunities for pupils to write more extensively.

The school has identified that there are weaknesses in the progress made by girls in mathematics in Years 3 to 6. Booster groups to increase girls' confidence and skills have had an impact in improving progress. However, this came too late last year to improve

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girls' performance at the end of Year 6, which was well below that of boys and of girls nationally. The inspection identified that girls are not always fully engaged in mathematics lessons. In addition, there are limited opportunities for investigative activities in mathematics that would enable girls to share ideas and support each other in learning.

New material and specific teaching of skills in reading has resulted in a recent improvement in progress in this area. While this is a success story, it has highlighted a significant gap between reading and writing. The inspection found that this is often an area of weakness for both boys and girls. While pupils are encouraged to write for a variety of purposes, opportunities are missed to extend their skills in subjects such as history. Too often, findings are recorded on worksheets that limit the scope for pupils to write independently. Many pupils, including those at the top end of the school, struggle with the organisation of their written work, for example in formulating coherent sentences and using paragraphs. Spelling skills are often weak.

The variation in pupils' progress is linked to inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. While there are good lessons throughout the school, others lack a sense of purpose. Introductions are sometimes over long and work is not always well matched to the range of pupils' needs. Senior leaders have identified key aspects of teaching that need to be improved and effective action has been taken to eradicate the weakest teaching. This action, and the success of the initiatives to improve pupils' interest and skills in reading, demonstrates that the school has sound capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in writing so that standards are at least in line with national averages by 2012 by:
 - improving pupils' skills in spelling and in understanding how to organise and structure their written work
 - extending opportunities for pupils to write independently in a range of subjects.
- Improve girls' achievement in mathematics so that by 2011 their performance at the end of Year 6 is at least in line with that of girls nationally by:
 - developing strategies to ensure girls' active engagement in all parts of mathematics lessons
 - improving provision for investigative work that encourages girls to work collaboratively in using and applying their mathematical skills.
- Eliminate the inconsistencies in teaching by ensuring that in all lessons:
 - time is used effectively and pupils are fully engaged in learning
 - activities are well matched to pupils' levels of understanding
 - expectations of their work rate are high.

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Pupils are generally keen and interested learners. In most lessons they readily offer their ideas and work well in pairs and small groups. In Year 6, for example, pupils collaborated well as they researched information about different aspects of life in Jamaica and discussed how they would present their group's findings on a poster. A group of Year 1 pupils, working with a teaching assistant, were keen to share their knowledge of the properties of two and three dimensional shapes as they created a collage picture of a castle. In situations such as these, pupils' achievement is good. In other lessons, however, pupils' positive attitudes are not utilised effectively because only a small number is involved in, for example, answering questions in introductory sessions. As a result, learning slows.

A range of intervention programmes is proving effective in addressing specific learning needs. Most recent data show that pupils getting extra support are doing well in reading but that, in line with their peers, progress in writing and mathematics is slower. Pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language benefit from well-targeted support. The use of a Polish speaking teaching assistant, for example, is very successful in enabling pupils to understand instructions and gain confidence in contributing their ideas in discussion.

Pupils show good awareness of the need to lead a healthy lifestyle and many are keen participants in a range of sports-related activities. The award of Healthy School status is recognition of the improvement in this area since the last inspection. Pupils are clear that there is little bullying and they would readily turn to an adult if they were concerned. Pupils contribute well to the running of the school by taking on a variety of responsibilities and putting forward their ideas for improvement. Participation in local events and fundraising activities contributes to their good social skills and awareness of others' needs. Pupils' understanding of a culturally diverse society is limited and this is a key area of focus over the current year.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A range of initiatives has been introduced to enhance key aspects of provision in order to improve pupils' achievement. The curriculum is being adapted to make links across subjects and make learning more meaningful. In Year 1, pupils' experience of the local carnival was used well as the basis for work in subjects such science, geography and art. Work has been undertaken to improve provision for English and mathematics and more is planned, particularly as staff changes mean that some initiatives have not been embedded.

Pupils are well known as individuals by all staff. Many parents and carers commented on the example set by the headteacher who 'always puts the children first'. Good links with local agencies and the work of the learning mentors mean that pupils with specific needs are given effective support. There are striking examples of pupils being helped to overcome significant difficulties so that they can benefit from all that the school offers. The school is assiduous in encouraging and rewarding good attendance and provides extra support for parents and carers who sometimes struggle to get their children to school regularly. The after-school club is well organised to provide a secure and caring experience for a significant number of pupils.

Good support from teaching assistants is successful in ensuring that pupils with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties are well integrated in lessons.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
	3
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?

Accurate evaluation of various aspects of the school's performance has been used well to inform priorities for further improvement. These are well founded and leaders at

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different levels are taking action to improve provision in key areas. Much of this work is in the early stages but is beginning to have an impact. Challenging targets are set for pupils' performance in national tests at the end of Year 6, but the school fell well short of these last year. More rigorous tracking of progress through the school is helping to check the extent to which pupils are on course to reach their targets and to take action where progress needs to be boosted.

The school is very inclusive and all pupils are welcomed. While the school is very effective in providing strong pastoral care for individuals, the work to ensure that all achieve equally well is still in the early stages.

Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and older pupils have good understanding of risk, for example in relation to drug misuse. The school is a cohesive community and links with a variety of local organisations, agencies and other schools are good, contributing well to pupils' experiences and their well-being. The school has rightly identified that, in order to further promote community cohesion, there is a need to strengthen links across the United Kingdom and globally. Governors are well organised to support the school and are becoming more proactive in asking questions about its effectiveness.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
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 equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

A high quality and stimulating learning environment enables children to learn well through a variety of imaginative experiences. A good balance between adult-led and independent activities allows children to explore, investigate and develop confidence as

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learners. Children start school with levels of understanding broadly in line with expectations, although their language skills are often limited. Whatever their starting points, they make good progress in all areas of learning. Attainment by the end of the Reception Year is slightly above average. Adaptations to the curriculum have improved progress over the past two years. There is now a particular focus on ensuring that boys become involved in a variety of writing activities, as they did not do as well as girls in this area last year. It is too early to judge the impact of this initiative in closing the gap, but the inspection found that a high proportion of boys are happy to get involved in writing activities.

Excellent leadership ensures that team work is strong and that staff share a common sense of purpose. All are skilled in taking every opportunity to extend children's understanding of language and their enthusiasm for learning. Children's progress is carefully tracked and information shared with parents and carers so that they become partners in supporting early learning. Many are effusive in their praise of their children's experiences. As one commented, 'My child started school lacking in confidence and has grown so much in this area.'

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

A high proportion of parents and carers completed inspection questionnaires. Almost all are happy with the quality of their children's experiences. A very small number raised individual concerns, but there was no specific issue that needed to be explored by the inspection team.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashcombe Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 244 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 419 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	160	66	73	30	4	2	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	160	66	77	32	2	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	130	48	101	46	9	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	130	53	101	42	5	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	152	62	84	34	3	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	138	57	94	39	7	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	144	59	92	38	3	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	138	57	94	39	4	2	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	122	50	108	44	7	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	177	73	60	25	2	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	169	69	67	27	1	0	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	169	69	57	27	1	0	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashcombe Primary School, Weston-super-Mare BS23 3JW

You may remember that a team of inspectors visited recently to see how you are getting on. Thanks to all of you who filled in questionnaires and talked to us about your work in lessons and the activities in which you get involved. We were pleased to see that almost all of you really enjoy school. Particular thanks to the school council and the groups of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils who met with us to share their experiences and views about how the school helps you to learn. I thought you might be interested in what we are saying in our report. Your school provides you with a sound education and does some things particularly well.

These are the good aspects that we found.

- You have lots of opportunities to participate in clubs, visits and special events. This helps you to develop good skills in working together and appreciating others' needs.
- Your behaviour is good and you help the school by carrying out jobs and putting forward your ideas about how to make it an even better place.
- Your headteacher and staff take good care of you and make sure that you get extra help if you need it.
- You have good understanding of the importance of keeping healthy and staying safe.
- Children in the Reception Year get a good start to school life and enjoy learning lots of new things.

We have suggested three things that the school needs to do now.

- Help you to improve your written work so that you do as well in this area as you are doing with reading.
- Make sure that girls do as well as boys in mathematics in Years 3 to 6.
- Make sure that you are kept busy in all parts of each lesson and that the work that you are given is just at the right level.

You can help by continuing to work hard and thinking carefully about spelling and punctuation when you are writing.

Thank you again for your help.

Yours sincerely

Shirley Billington

Lead Inspector

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