

Ash Grove Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111017
Local Authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	337610
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Clare Henderson

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sue Brown
Headteacher	Mr Kevin Simpson
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited nine lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of evidence including material on pupils' progress, safeguarding, the curriculum and 10 questionnaires completed by parents, together with others from pupils and staff.

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

- the attainment, progress and learning of all groups of pupils in English, mathematics and science
- the effectiveness of teaching, assessment and the curriculum in ensuring all pupils achieve their potential
- the quality of pupils' behaviour, how safe they feel, attendance levels and the quality of care, support and guidance
- the effectiveness of recent changes to staffing, to leaders and managers in bringing about improvements to pupils' learning and well-being.

Information about the school

The school is below average in size. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is high. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. More pupils than usual join or leave the school at times other than the start of a term. The Early Years Foundation Stage unit consists of Nursery and Reception-age group children. The school provides a breakfast club which was inspected as part of this inspection. The after-school club was subject to a separate inspection, the report for which is available on the Ofsted website. The headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2009.

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

Ash Grove is a satisfactory and improving school. Since the previous inspection, it has experienced disruptions to the quality and stability of teaching and senior leadership. With close support from the local authority, very effective staff changes have been made this year; dynamic senior leaders, highly skilled teachers, an extremely effective learning mentor and experienced governors have been appointed.

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are low in all areas of learning. They make satisfactory progress overall although the outdoor provision does not provide them with enough opportunities to investigate, explore or develop their physical skills. Because of past disruptions, when pupils leave in Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science have remained low in recent years. However, the work of highly effective senior leaders, staff and governors is already paying off: the learning and progress of all pupils is satisfactory and improving, exclusions have been eliminated and pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. The safeguarding of pupils is good and they are keen to say how safe they feel in school. Attendance, though still below average, is improving rapidly.

Previous tracking systems used by teachers and leaders to record and assess pupil progress have been weak. New detailed tracking evidence and the inspectors' observations of pupils at work confirms that, whilst current attainment remains significantly below average, it is rising. Improvements to teaching are making a significant contribution to this rise in standards and are helping to narrow the attainment gap rapidly. Performance data indicate that pupils in Year 6, for example, are on track to attain standards which are much closer to the national average than they have been for a number of years. The school evaluates its own strengths and weaknesses precisely and has made very detailed plans for improvement. The early impact of these plans is evident in the improved rates of progress pupils are making in lessons. Taken together, these factors demonstrate the school's satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The curriculum is enriched well with features such as a wide range of interesting after-school clubs, which pupils enjoy. However, it does not currently give pupils enough opportunities to further develop their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills through work in other subjects. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Effective links with the local community enable pupils to learn more about the values of those around them. Less well developed are the opportunities the pupils have to engage with communities beyond the locality and with people from different cultures and beliefs.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment, learning and progress in English, mathematics and science by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to apply literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across all subjects of the curriculum
 - ensure consistent use of assessment and tracking systems so that activities in lessons are always matched closely to pupils' learning needs
- Develop outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to extend children's physical development and opportunities to investigate and explore.
- Develop the leadership skills of subject leaders so that they have a greater impact upon pupils' learning and progress.
- Help pupils to develop a wider understanding of communities beyond their own local and school community.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged to be satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

When pupils start Year 1, their skills are low and, because of previously low expectations of what they should achieve, attainment has been well below average as pupils progressed through the school to the end of Year 6. However, the high quality of teaching that newly appointed staff are providing has been instrumental in accelerating learning and pupils' progress in lessons. Progress is now satisfactory overall and in some lessons it is good. As a result, standards are rising although they remain significantly below average because short term gains in pupils' progress evident in lessons have not yet translated into longer term improvements in performance.

In lessons, pupils respond well to activities, which are mostly well matched to their interests and capabilities. Effective personal support for the high number of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the more vulnerable ensures they are ready, content and able to learn without distractions. As a result they too make satisfactory progress. Generally, pupils work steadily and at times show high levels of enthusiasm for their learning. This is evident in those lessons where pupils are actively involved. For instance, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, pupils were planning to write a letter to the local council with their reasons for improving the local park. In order to do this, they visited the park to see what needed to be done. Because of the experiences gained during the visit, they were keen and well motivated to write their letters.

Behaviour and attendance are much improved this term. Parents and pupils comment that behaviour is much better. Pupils say that they feel safe in school, that incidents of bullying are rare and that they know who to turn to if they have a problem. Consistent rules and expectations of behaviour have been established. Pupils understand what is

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expected and the few who present challenging behaviour only need gentle reminders to stay on task. Pupils are generally polite and responsive to adults, understand why and how to lead a healthy lifestyle and say they really enjoy the many after-school clubs which are now available. As school councillors, they say they can, 'make things better in school' and are proud that they identified, in their 'hot spots and grot spots' project the need for, and purchase of, new carpets, now seen throughout the school.

Pupils are involved in the local community, for instance, in joining the brass band or in raising money for charities. Their increased responsibilities and experience of teamwork and problem solving in lessons, together with the positive impact of rising attainment and improved progress, prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage in their education. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. However, their knowledge and understanding of religious and cultural communities other than their own is at an early stage of development.

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	4
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	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress is satisfactory overall. It is

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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enabling pupils to make at least satisfactory progress in most lessons and increasingly to make good progress. In some respects teaching is good, particularly at times in Key Stage 2 when the good pace of lessons keeps pupils attentive and eager to learn. Teachers are rapidly narrowing the attainment gap that has been evident in the past because of a lack of consistent planning or use of assessment information to extend pupils' learning. Most teachers consistently use assessments of pupils' progress for matching tasks to their individual learning needs. This makes learning relevant, interesting and enjoyable and particularly so for those pupils who have not, in the past, always wanted to take part in lessons.

The curriculum is adequately matched to pupils' interests although information and communication technology skills are not used well enough to enrich pupils' learning. There is some evidence of teachers making creative links in learning, for example, the development of historical and literacy skills observed during a lesson on the Second World War in Years 3 and 4. In this lesson, pupils' knowledge and understanding of life for children during the war was extended as they wrote a letter imagining how it would feel to be a child during those times. Pupils now access and enjoy a wide range of after-school clubs, trips, residential visits, Spanish lessons and opportunities to excel in music, sports or the arts.

Pastoral care for all pupils and their families is given a high priority. The learning mentor's good influence is already being effective in encouraging those with poor attendance or those who are new to the school to feel happy to come to school. The breakfast club is well attended. Because of this and pupils' general enjoyment of all that is on offer in school, attendance levels, though still low, are rising.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, governors and staff led by the unstinting effort of the headteacher have established a strong team who have worked purposefully and with urgency this term to improve pupils' achievement. No time has been lost, morale is high, teamwork is effective and there is a strong momentum for improving the school. However, the leadership experience of some subject leaders is new and there has been limited time for further training to help them ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they should.. The expertise in school management shown by the chair, vice chair and the safeguarding governors are strong assets. However, some governors are new to the

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management role and governance is satisfactory overall.

The staff work hard to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all pupils, that discrimination is tackled and girls and boys have equal access to all learning opportunities. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory. Staff work hard to encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education. The school has established satisfactory partnerships with other professionals to access specialist help for those more vulnerable pupils.

Pupils' safety is paramount. All the required systems, procedures and practices for safeguarding pupils are in place and understood by staff. Senior leaders are vigilant and well organised in evaluating procedures and planning further improvements. Community cohesion is satisfactory overall. The school works hard to develop community links and raise the profile of the school in the local area. The community brass band which meets in the school is a good example of its success. The school has established a link with a Jewish school in a different area to its own and, although staff visit from the school to teach pupils to sing in Hebrew, there has not yet been an opportunity for pupils to meet. Similarly, international links with a school in America are currently at the planning stage.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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

Children begin the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills which are well below those expected at their age and particularly low in their social, emotional, speaking and listening skills. The recent appointment of an early years specialist as Early Years Foundation Stage leader has resulted in previous weaknesses in the provision being

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addressed successfully. With support from senior leaders and outside agencies, she has rapidly improved provision and outcomes for the children. She has quickly put in place an accurate tracking system for recording the progress children make. These records show that outcomes for children in all the areas of learning are currently satisfactory. The curriculum has been improved considerably and children were observed playing happily together in the warm and welcoming indoor environment. They choose which activities they wish to engage in whilst caring adults play alongside them guiding them in how to share and play. Already these skills are developing well as the children become more independent and confident. The staff have close links with parents and carers and on a daily basis take great care to support the children and their families through, for instance, giving them an opportunity to share any, 'wow did you see that' moments from home. Resources for outdoor play are less well developed and children do not have enough opportunities on a daily basis to investigate, explore or develop their physical skills. As a result of the rapid changes in provision and outcomes for the children, leadership of the unit is satisfactory.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of the small number of parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire is content with the quality of education and care the school provides. Comments include, 'Changes have been a breath of fresh air and given the children security and stability, it's like walking into a different place, calmer and more peaceful.' Discussions with parents during the inspection confirmed that their children enjoy school. The inspectors found no reason to disagree with these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ash Grove Primary and Nursery 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 inspector received 10 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 102 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	7	70	3	30	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	40	6	60	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	5	50	4	40	1	10	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	5	50	5	50	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	4	40	6	60	0	0	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)	3	30	7	70	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	4	40	6	60	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	2	20	6	60	1	10	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	3	30	7	70	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	60	4	40	0	0	0	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.



3 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ash Grove Primary and Nursery School, Macclesfield SK11 7TF

Thank you for being so helpful during your school's inspection. The inspectors enjoyed the time spent with you. I am writing to let you know what we found out. It was good to hear that you like coming to school now and that you make satisfactory progress in your English, mathematics and science lessons. It was also pleasing to hear about how safe you feel in school and that there is always someone to talk to if you have concerns. Most of you behave well and you know about how to keep healthy and safe. Those of you involved in the school council take your duties seriously and it was lovely to see the new carpet that you helped to choose. Together with your decorated Christmas trees, it made your school look so welcoming and clean. We judge that you go to a satisfactory school. You get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Your teachers and other staff help you to achieve satisfactorily in your lessons. The school takes satisfactory care of you and helps you to get on together. The curriculum is satisfactory and you have some good opportunities for after-school activities.

The headteacher and governors want the school to become even better and so I have asked them to do several things to improve the school:

- improve the outdoor area in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that children have more chances to explore and investigate
- give you all regular opportunities to apply your literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in all the other subjects you study
- use assessment information to set work in lessons which helps you to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science
- broaden your knowledge of different people and religions beyond your area.

We hope you will play your part by continuing to work hard and do your best so Ash Grove can become a good or outstanding school.

Yours sincerely

Clare Henderson

Lead inspector

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