

Ashburton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113184
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	338117
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Kerly

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	211
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barbara Dunball
Headteacher	Rachel Shaw
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2007
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Introduction

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 14 lessons and all eight teachers present during the two days, and held meetings with groups of pupils, the chair of governors and staff. They also observed the school's work and looked at a range of school documents including records of pupils' progress and other monitoring activities, school policies and guidelines, teachers' plans and questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 65 parents.

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

- evidence of improved attainment and accelerated progress in Years 3 to 6
- the distribution of the large group of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the impact these pupils' performance has on the school's overall rates of progress and attainment
- the consistency of teaching across all sections of the school following a number of recent staff changes
- specific examples of how well the school uses information gained from its own checks to improve its practice and performance.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average but numbers are stable. Almost all pupils are White British and speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs are much greater than usual. These pupils are not evenly distributed across the school, appearing in clusters in different year groups. Their needs are wide ranging, including learning difficulties, mainly related to speech and language, emotional and behavioural issues and physical disabilities. There have been significant changes in staff in the last two years including of the headteacher. The school has a national Leading Aspect Award for its creative curriculum as well as Healthy Schools and Activemark awards.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school. It provides a stimulating and caring environment in which pupils flourish. Almost all aspects of pupils' personal development are good. All pupils are cared for well and there are outstandingly effective partnerships with parents and other professionals in order to meet the needs of those with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities as well as those who may be regarded as vulnerable. The very large majority of those parents and carers who responded to the inspectors' questionnaire demonstrated their appreciation of these many qualities.

Pupils make good progress, often from low starting points. Attainment is average. However, it fluctuates from year to year, being lower in those year groups where the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than usual. Attainment is frequently above average in reading, but attainment in writing and mathematics, while broadly average, is less consistently so. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle quickly and make good progress. This good progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 1. In Key Stage 2, progress has been less consistent. This previous inconsistency is diminishing and the large majority of these older pupils are making good progress this year. Teaching is good. Teachers provide pupils with stimulating experiences that motivate them. Evidence from pupils' books and in a few lessons seen indicates that some very effective methods for assessing pupils' learning are being developed. However, teachers do not always make full use of their assessments, particularly in Key Stage 2, to ensure work set is sufficiently matched to the pupils' different abilities. The pupils show exceptional levels of awareness and responsibility regarding the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles, eating healthily and taking lots of exercise. Pupils' moral and social development is very strong, with older pupils caring for younger ones and playing happily alongside one another. Pupils' awareness and appreciation of the cultural diversity of modern Britain beyond rural Devon are limited. The school has reflected well on the priorities within its immediate community, meets these needs well, and ensures pupils are involved in local festivals and events. However, there are relatively few planned opportunities to help pupils establish direct links across the national community.

The headteacher provides clear and effective leadership. She is supported well by the staff and governors. Other leaders fulfil their individual roles well, such as co-ordinating the provision for the many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the senior leadership team does not have a totally clear brief for its overall strategic role and seldom meets formally to consider issues in depth. Nevertheless, the school has an accurate view of its performance with effective procedures for checking its work, including some comprehensive and efficient systems for tracking pupils' progress.

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Rigorous checks are frequently carried out in classrooms and findings are used well to plan for and bring about further improvements, for example in the changed approaches to teaching writing. There is a strong commitment to raise standards and the school has good capacity to maintain previous strengths and improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment further, particularly in writing and mathematics, by ensuring that the quality of teaching is good or better in the majority of lessons in all Key Stage 2 classes by October 2010, through:
 - making good use of assessments to match activities and learning to the abilities of all pupils
 - ensuring that the more able pupils are challenged and the curriculum is sufficiently adapted to reflect their needs
 - providing clear feedback to pupils about how to improve their learning
 - involving pupils regularly in reflecting on their learning and next steps.
- Clarify and strengthen the strategic role of senior leaders individually and collectively as members of the leadership team by July 2010.
- Ensure that there are frequent and planned opportunities to promote pupils' understanding of Britain's cultural diversity thereby helping to strengthen the school's contribution to national community cohesion.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Attainment is average and has been rising steadily across the school, most notably at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 2. This year, after a dip in 2009, attainment is rising strongly in Year 6 and pupils are on track to obtain their challenging targets set at the beginning of the year. Observations in class, from pupils' books and the school's assessments show most boys and girls are making good progress and working at levels expected nationally for their age with a considerable proportion, especially in reading, attaining levels above expectations. Relatively few pupils are exceeding expectations in writing and mathematics. In a few lessons progress slows, especially for the more able, when work is not sufficiently challenging. The pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress and many of them are closing the gap and approaching standards expected for their age. However, others, mainly those with very low starting points and exceptional levels of need, are still some way behind the average for their age, despite carefully planned and delivered additional opportunities and support, often on a one-to-one basis. Pupils are soundly prepared for the next stage of education and adult life. They benefit from the frequent opportunities to use computers, and use them confidently, for example when making information leaflets for the trip to the Isle of Wight. They collaborate well and take pride in the presentation of their work. Although the very large majority clearly achieve well and enjoy school, overall attendance levels are average, despite the school working

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closely with families and the community to improve it.

Almost all pupils participate enthusiastically in the daily physical activity. Pupils have a very keen understanding of adopting healthy lifestyles. An example of this was when the volunteer 'dinner ladies' from Year 6 were observed diligently checking for washed hands on entrance to the hall for lunch, with all the pupils readily respecting the need for personal hygiene. This also demonstrates the good ways in which pupils contribute to helping run the school community. Buddies, play leaders and school councillors all fulfil their roles conscientiously. Pupils also play a significant part in the local community, for example in the 'ale and bread' festival. They willingly raise funds for charities, but in other ways pupils have limited awareness or links with urban and diverse communities across Britain. This gap in cultural awareness is a relative weakness in their overall good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The overwhelming majority of pupils behave well throughout the school day, working and playing together happily. There are clear procedures for managing the very few pupils who exhibit challenging behaviour, and these are carried out consistently, minimising any disruption. Pupils feel safe in school. One school councillor reported, 'The teachers make sure we are safe and happy.' Almost all parents and carers agree.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	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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How effective is the provision?

Much of the teaching is good. In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1 it is consistently good. There is also good teaching in Key Stage 2 but here it is less consistent. Almost all teachers use a wide and effective range of assessment procedures in day-to-day lessons and at the end of units of work. These include referring to the school's assessment information that tracks progress over time, encouraging pupils to assess their own progress and discuss with their partners likely next steps as targets. For the most part, these targets are used well to set work at the right levels for pupils of different abilities and needs. However, on occasions, particularly in writing and mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2, lengthy whole-class introductions and plenaries at the end of lessons do not address the range of abilities. This results, for example, in able pupils, already secure in the lesson's learning intention, being required to listen to detailed explanations of simple concepts to the whole class. It is clear from pupils' books and observations made, that in a small minority of lessons in Key Stage 2 the same work is set for nearly all pupils.

Teachers plan interesting activities to motivate the pupils, making effective links between different subjects in the curriculum, for example writing in English on salmon spawning linked to work in science. Classrooms, central areas and the outdoor environment are all stimulating, including the excellent range of apparatus recently installed on the playground for play and lunchtimes. Several national awards reflect the effective practice in developing the curriculum, and the use of innovative materials successfully promotes pupils' personal development. The curriculum is adapted very skilfully and frequently to meet the needs of those pupils with significant special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional trained staff are deployed well to provide the extra support needed to enable these pupils to participate as fully as possible. The school provides some additional experiences off-site for the most able pupils, but recognises the need to extend the limited range of planned day-to-day experiences in school for these pupils.

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to the inclusion of all pupils. This is recognised by almost all parents and pupils in the questionnaires. It quickly identifies individual pupils' needs, works closely with parents and is very tenacious in obtaining the support of external agencies to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and to enable all pupils to be valued members of the school community. Nurture groups and one-to-one support are effective and pupils report being confident that there is someone in school to help and care for them. 'Going for goals' work displayed around school illustrates the school's commitment to guide pupils towards wider horizons and to seek ambitious goals, be it to become 'the editor of animated films', a 'primary school teacher' or 'the best DJ in England'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, on arrival, quickly demonstrated high expectations of all sectors of the school's community including the pupils, staff, governors and parents. These high expectations have led to significant improvements, most notably in classroom practice, the learning environment, the promotion of a strong pupil voice and effective partnerships. The comprehensive system for tracking pupils' progress is used well and challenging targets are set, helping to raise standards. The headteacher leads by example, setting a clear sense of direction for the school, and skilfully motivates those around her for the benefit of the pupils. These qualities combine well and contribute to the school's good capacity to continue to improve.

Together with governors the headteacher has made clear and incisive decisions following careful analysis of the school's performance, always maintaining a clear focus on the impact for pupils. These decisions are based on rigorous checks and increasingly involve other leaders. However, while subject leaders are clear about their roles, the senior leaders seldom meet formally as a whole team to review strategic issues. Procedures for allocating senior leaders' responsibilities across the school and throughout the year remain unclear. The school has effective improvement plans, both long term and those responding to unexpected events, for example the recent careful planning to ensure maximum continuity at a time of unscheduled staff changes during this term. Governors are led well and in turn contribute well to the strategic decision-making process. All procedures designed to safeguard pupils are implemented rigorously with ongoing training for staff. The inclusion of all pupils reflects the strong commitment to equal opportunities. Discrimination is not tolerated and very occasional inappropriate incidents are dealt with resolutely and kept under review thereafter. The school is aware of limited success in promoting community cohesion beyond the school's local environment, where it is good. Global links are becoming established but there has been little progress in reflecting on how best to help pupils to gain an awareness of the diversity of need and aspiration within the national community.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

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	
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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

When children start in the Reception class many of them have skills below that expected nationally for their age and very few above expectations. They settle quickly and make good progress in all areas of learning. While most attain average levels by the end of the year, and a few exceed them, a number of children, particularly those with significant special needs, remain below expectations. The recently established teaching team provides a wide range of experiences in a stimulating environment in and out of doors, making good use of the secure designated outdoor area and all-weather canopy. They plan a good balance of experiences, some initiated by the children and others led by adults. The children become absorbed in their learning, for example when planting bulbs in their 'Ashburton Garden Centre', or gazing at the eggs in the incubator, and careful observations by the teachers help to ensure that new experiences respond to the children's learning and interests. While assessment information is gathered and collated, day-to-day observations are not always systematically recorded. The children are safe and well cared for by adults and by their Year 6 buddies and move confidently around the school. There is good liaison between the new leader and the previous leader who continues in post within the school, successfully blending new ideas with previous experience.

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	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

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Views of parents and carers

Relatively few parents and carers responded to the inspectors' questionnaire. Of those that did, the very large majority expressed their support for each question with almost unanimous support for the questions related to keeping children safe, children enjoying school and overall levels of satisfaction with the school. Inspectors agree with these sentiments. There was no consistent pattern in the very small minority of parents who expressed concerns about various aspects.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashburton 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 65 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 211 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	40	62	21	32	4	6	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	71	18	28	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	31	48	30	46	4	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	31	48	30	46	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	39	60	22	34	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	30	46	26	40	6	9	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	48	28	43	3	5	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)	26	40	26	40	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	31	48	25	38	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	48	23	35	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	30	46	22	34	4	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	40	62	19	29	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	66	19	29	0	0	1	2

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.



16 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashburton Primary School, Ashburton TQ13 7DW

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing some of your work. Yours is a good school with many things that make it special. Many of you told us you feel safe in school and that adults take good care of you. We agree, and so do your parents and carers. We are particularly impressed by the very mature way you recognise how important it is to stay healthy, for example by eating healthy food and doing lots of exercise.

You behave well in lessons and around the school. You are lucky to have so many interesting things set up in the playground for playtimes and lunchtimes. In lessons you listen carefully, get on with your work sensibly and make good progress. Your teachers plan lots of interesting things in the classroom and special events such as the dance for life sessions. Many of you help out around school with regular jobs such as being play leaders, buddies or school councillors. We were impressed by the way some of you volunteered to be 'dinner ladies' on Wednesday. Everyone who works in the school takes good care of you all, especially those of you who have problems from time to time or find lessons difficult.

The headteacher has lots of ideas for improving the school. We have asked her, along with the staff and governors, to work on three things to make it even better.

- To help those of you in Key Stage 2 make even more progress with your writing and mathematics by ensuring teachers always give you work that is not too hard or too easy for you and help you to be clear about what you have learnt and how to improve further.
- To make sure that all the leaders are clear about their most important jobs around the school.
- To provide more opportunities for you to get to know about people's lives and different customs in other parts of Britain.

You can help by continuing to work hard, telling your teachers if work is too easy or too difficult and by continuing to be helpful around the school.

Yours sincerely

Martin Kerly

Lead Inspector

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