

Ashton Church of England Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121957
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	340057
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Trevor Watts

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Russell Hardman
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Campbell
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector visited seven lessons and held meetings with staff, governors, pupils and parents. He observed the school's work, and looked at documents concerned with care, safeguarding, the curriculum and pupils' progress and standards. Questionnaire returns from staff, pupils and parents were also scrutinised. There were 26 parental returns, representing almost every pupil in school.

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

- pupils' standards in English and mathematics in both key stages
- aspects of leadership and management, including self-evaluation, capacity to improve and the role of the governors
- the curriculum and measures to ensure pupils' care.

Information about the school

This is a very small school set in a village in a rural part of Northamptonshire. On average, there are only six pupils in each year group. Virtually all pupils are White British. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. This varies greatly from one year group to the next, and has increased in recent years, as has the number of children who are in the care of their local authority.

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

Sound leadership and management by the headteacher, who has been in post for one year, have resulted in standards being maintained at around the national average in each key stage. Pupils make good progress in their personal development. They enjoy their work and other activities and they behave well. Pupils gain a good sense of what is right and wrong, and learn much about their own, and other cultures and countries.

The headteacher has observed lessons and made changes to the teaching, especially in the planning of lessons and the use of resources, such as the electronic white boards and laptops. With up to four year groups in each class, it is difficult for teachers to plan precisely focused activities for every pupil at all times. Before dividing pupils into groups according to their ability or age, teachers tend to explain at length to all the class. This is not very challenging for pupils, and can make them a little restless at times. The good curriculum offers a full range of subjects, with many enriching activities. Care and safeguarding procedures are thorough and are well followed by staff, who have all undertaken appropriate training. Classroom support staff are capable, but often have only a limited role in lessons.

The school's satisfactory capacity to improve is based on the headteacher's skills and the team spirit of the dedicated staff. Governors support the school soundly, but do not have a clear understanding of pupils' standards of attainment. They are thus not able to challenge the school sufficiently about pupils' progress and attainment, or what can be done to raise standards further. Recent self-evaluation identified relative weaknesses in handwriting, reading and mental mathematics. The robust response was to introduce booster groups and extra lessons in these areas, but these need to be strengthened further. Support for the increasing number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has also been strengthened considerably. The present development plan includes improving the already good system of assessing and analysing pupils' progress. As a result of actions prompted by the school's previous inspection report, pupils mainly have a clear understanding of what their learning targets are, and what they need to do to achieve them.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mental mathematics by providing more focused and challenging support for all pupils.
 - Improve learning in classes that have a wide age and ability range by introducing more difficult and less difficult activities for different groups of pupils at an earlier stage of the lesson, particularly by the leadership of groups

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by classroom support staff where available.

- Encourage governors to become more aware of pupils' academic attainment, and to challenge and support the school more readily and closely to help improve standards.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Children enter the Reception Year with levels of skill, knowledge and understanding broadly typical of this age group. They enjoy their learning and make satisfactory progress during their year in Reception. Children achieve satisfactorily in all areas of their learning except in their social and personal skills, where their progress is good.

In Key Stage 1 pupils continue to progress at the same steady pace, and by the end of Year 2 they are attaining in line with the national average for pupils of their age. In lessons they learn and achieve satisfactorily. They are attentive and can concentrate for longer periods, taking some pride in the presentation of their work, such as in writing or art.

Similarly, in Key Stage 2 pupils make satisfactory progress and their learning in lessons is sound. They increasingly apply their skills across different subjects, especially information and communication technology (ICT) and English. They achieve satisfactorily through the key stage, and by the end of Year 6 continue to attain in line with the national average in each of the main subjects. Science is a stronger subject than English or mathematics as a rule, but this varies a little year by year. In both key stages, pupils who are newly in the care of their local authority have received extra support, and are showing clear signs of improving standards and attendance. At 97%, pupils' attendance is good and improving.

Pupils enjoy their lessons and extra activities, which are very well attended. They are polite, friendly and sociable. Pupils behave well in lessons, at lunch or in the playground. Lessons are not disrupted by behavioural problems. They are well managed and supported by staff. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They understand that there are beautiful and wonderful things in the world and for example, took part solemnly in the Remembrance Day service. They understand what is right and wrong as it applies to themselves and in other situations. Their understanding and involvement in their own culture is especially strong, and they have sound knowledge of other cultures around the world. Pupils say there is no bullying or vandalism. They understand risks that they could be exposed to, and have successfully approached the local council with a proposal to make the road past the school safer.

Pupils know how to live a healthy lifestyle. They have good awareness of what foods and drinks are healthy, and they make a good effort to select them when possible. They know about beneficial and harmful drugs and they very much enjoy a wide variety of physical activities in school and as extra activities. Their involvement in the community is

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good, partly through many sports activities with local clubs and other schools, and also in numerous activities such as making a village banner for the church and village hall. Other events include a bonfire celebration that was on the television recently, harvest festival, Easter and Christmas events, as well as many fund-raising activities for local, national and world-wide charities. Pupils have exchange visits with an urban school in a multi-ethnic part of the county. They take responsibility for many jobs in school and know that they should be punctual, hygienic, cooperative with others and polite, to help them in their future lives.

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
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	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The teaching has several strong elements. Lesson planning is clear and builds well on what pupils have learned previously. It includes imaginative activities to make lessons challenging for pupils of different ages and abilities within each class. Staff and pupils use ICT and other resources widely and capably. Teachers and support staff are confident, know their pupils well and enjoy positive relationships with them. Over-long explanations to the whole class lead to learning time being lost. When pupils split into

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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groups for their own work, the level of difficulty is generally well-pitched to be sufficiently challenging for them, although pupils agree that they could work harder at times.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and effectively, with clear guidance as to what is needed to improve. Individual verbal guidance from staff is effective during lessons. Teachers often hold a worthwhile mini-review of what is being learned in the middle of a lesson, as well as a more complete one at the end. They track pupils' progress throughout the year, making good use of assessment tests as well as using their own judgement in summarising trends in progress.

Strengths in the curriculum include the full breadth of the subjects taught, including French in both key stages, and with music tuition available for at least two instruments for all pupils. Physical education and ICT are also strong. Teachers are skilled at planning and teaching topics to include aspects of different subjects, such as in a recent topic which included having a visitor in to help build a Tudor house. Other visitors help to enrich the curriculum, including for Indian art, St John Ambulance, the Life Education bus and cycling safety. Pupils engage in events and competitions on a county-wide basis, and have been in national finals for a construction kit building competition. They also join in a 'Roots Weekend' reunion that attracts former pupils from all over the world.

Pupils say they feel safe, but if they did have worries they would be happy to seek staff help. The school works in partnership with many outside agencies to enhance pupils' care and support, including a behaviour support service, the local authority's care service and an attendance officer. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well through the close awareness of their needs by all staff. Transition arrangements into the school are much aided by the 'mother and toddler' group's presence in the school each week. When leaving, pupils visit all the nearby secondary schools for awareness events, and they also go to regular sporting and other activities at these schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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?

Because there are so few staff, each person has many roles. The headteacher has only one other full-time teacher, who is new to the school. However, all staff work willingly together with a spirit of community purpose. The headteacher has developed a clear

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perception of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. She has effectively begun to organise staff responsibilities for different aspects of the school. She has also overseen the building of an extension to the premises which offers greater opportunities for new activities, or a better home for existing activities such as reading groups and music tuition. Improvement planning centres on an accurate evaluation of pupils' standards, with additional support being provided in several areas of learning. A comprehensive training programme for all staff has been initiated, for both safeguarding and academic matters. Governors are supportive, manage the finances well, and have helped to organise the premises and security arrangements. However, their awareness of academic matters and pupils' standards is more limited, and they do not fully provide the level of challenge and support that the school needs in this area.

Safeguarding is good because staff understand the guidelines and follow them scrupulously. Staff have been trained in many aspects of health, safety and child protection and they know the pupils well. New staff and visitors are checked thoroughly, and all the procedures are adhered to meticulously, including the maintenance of the central records.

There are innumerable times when the school is involved with parents, from village festivals to help with reading, art, mathematics groups, going on trips and helping at sports events. Parents are not, however, routinely involved in decision-making about major aspects of the school's provision. Many other agencies support learning, including cricket, cross-country and rugby clubs as well as several local schools that engage in joint projects. School leaders ensure that there is no discrimination and that there is equality of opportunity for all pupils. Everyone has full access to all activities, regardless of their difficulties or backgrounds. They can all join in trips out, music tuition and out-of-school events if they wish, and all receive the support they need to facilitate their learning. The school is central to the village community: the parish council holds its meetings in the school and the minibus is loaned out to other schools and to enable the transport of elderly people to an internet surfing day at a local secondary school. Many activities involve the adjacent church and village hall. Further afield, the school contributes to pupils' sense of a wider community by its involvement with other schools in different environments and support for children and families in, for instance, Africa and Belarus. Through its effective deployment of staff and other resources, the school manages its finances prudently. It provides satisfactory value for money.

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

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Reception Year meets the needs of the youngest children soundly. Children behave well, feel safe, follow instructions closely, play in creative and imaginative ways and begin to draw, write, and read simple words. Beneficially, they learn to get along with older classmates in Years 1 and 2, but this also creates difficulties for staff in organising appropriate activities when the whole class is being taught together. In general, however, the activities they engage in are appropriate to their abilities and interests when they are in a small group or on their own and are following activities that are designed especially for them. Sometimes when they have finished their work quickly they are not sufficiently encouraged to do more, or harder, activities as an extension of the main task. Instead, they will engage in unplanned and unstructured play in the outside area. Children's progress is monitored and recorded carefully. Staff know the children thoroughly and look after them with care. The unit is managed soundly as a part of the main school, with the headteacher having day-to-day responsibility for routines.

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 great majority of parents who returned the questionnaire were entirely supportive of the school, seeing 'superb education' in a 'very proactive' school. Several mentioned the positive family ethos and how much their children enjoyed school and gained from the experience. 'My child thrives,' wrote one, whilst another praised staff for 'going above and beyond' in what they do for the children. A few expressed doubts as to

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whether their children were being sufficiently stretched to enable them to progress well into the next phase of education. A very small minority considered the management of some pupils' behaviour to be lacking. The inspection found that pupils could be stretched more at times, but that behaviour was managed appropriately and well, including that of some pupils with specific difficulties.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashton 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 26 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection.

In total, there are 42 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	62	17	38	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	26	58	18	40	1	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	47	23	51	1	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	49	18	40	3	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	56	17	38	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	53	17	38	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	47	20	44	4	9	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)	20	44	21	47	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	40	24	53	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	33	21	47	4	9	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	42	16	36	4	9	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	22	49	18	40	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	62	14	31	2	4	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.



12 November 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashton Church of England Primary School, Ashton, NN7 2JH

I'm sure you will remember when an inspector visited your school recently. Thank you for being so polite and helping me, especially the school council members who came to talk with me.

I found that you go to a satisfactory school that is at the heart of the village community, and has a warm 'family feeling' to it. You make progress that is satisfactory and you reach standards at about the same level as pupils in other schools across the country. Your teachers know you well and prepare their lessons carefully, giving you a lot of help when you need it, especially those of you who sometimes struggle with your work. Sometimes your learning can be too slow when your teachers try to teach everyone in the class at once. This can be too easy for some of the older children, and too hard for the youngest ones. I have asked your teachers to try to arrange more work in groups that is hard enough to really make you think and work harder. This is so that you can do better by the time you are ready to leave the school, especially in English and mathematics. You are taught a good range of subjects and you have the chance to learn French, different sports, musical instruments and computing skills, for instance, as well as all the other subjects. The staff look after you well and make sure you are safe at all times. The people who run your school do so carefully and thoughtfully. I am asking the governors to give more help to your headteacher in running the school and helping you to learn more, as it is very difficult to do this almost on her own.

With my best wishes

Trevor Watts

Inspector

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