

Ash Grove Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130858
Local Authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	341043
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2010
Reporting inspector	David Carter HMI

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	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jane Hirst
Headteacher	Mrs J Davis
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2006
School address	Ash Grove South Elmsall Pontefract WF9 2TF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, observing nine teachers, and spent a large majority of inspection time looking at learning and pupils' work. The inspectors held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including school policies, improvement plan, and analysis of the school records on pupils' progress and attainment. The inspection team received and analysed 55 questionnaires from parents and carers, as well as a number of questionnaires completed by pupils.

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

- the attainment of pupils and the progress that they make through the school
- the progress made by more able pupils
- the quality of teaching and the extent to which the curriculum meets the needs of pupils
- the attendance of pupils
- the capacity of the school to make sustained improvements.

Information about the school

Ash Grove is a larger than average school. The proportion of pupils eligible for a free school meal is slightly above the national average. Most pupils are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above the national average, as is the proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.

The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, which incorporates a Nursery and a Reception class.

The school runs a Breakfast Club which is managed by the governing body. The school holds a number of awards, including: Investors in People status, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools Standards and the Activemark.

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 provides a welcoming and nurturing environment, where pupils receive good care, guidance and support. It is at the heart of its community and has established good relationships with parents and carers, who value the work of the school. Pupils feel safe due to the good arrangements for safeguarding and they behave well. Pupils enjoy making a positive contribution to the daily life of the school, through their roles and responsibilities as playground buddies, school councillors and peer mediators. Their understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle is outstanding, exemplified by their work on, 'wake up shake up' sessions, which are enjoyed by staff and pupils alike.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. The staff team know the children as individuals and they use their assessments well in order to plan to meet their needs. As a result, children are now making good progress from starting points which are well below those expected for their age.

Since the last inspection, pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has been below average, and the rates of progress across the key stage has been satisfactory. This remains an area of challenge for the school, as the pupils' current work reveals that standards remain below average. The standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 have varied from year-to-year, and although broadly average, the standards attained by the most recent cohort, were below what is expected. Although progress has been satisfactory across Key Stage 2, at present not enough pupils are making the expected rates of progress in their learning, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment and their rates of progress are currently no better than satisfactory. Despite the school's work, the pupils' attendance is low, although analysis of the current information reveals that this is improving rapidly.

The quality of teaching and the use of assessment are satisfactory. Although the school collates detailed information on pupils' attainment and progress, this is not being used effectively enough to match pupils' work to their individual needs. The feedback provided to pupils through marking, is inconsistent across the school and pupils are not provided with sufficient opportunities to show how they have responded to the teachers' comments. Pupils are often reliant on the teacher for their learning and older pupils in particular, have few opportunities to work independently.

The school has recently introduced a new curriculum, which is helping to engage pupils more in their learning. Although this is yet to show a direct impact upon academic outcomes, it is supporting pupils' personal development and well-being.

The headteacher's drive, direction and challenge are moving the school forward. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and there is a clear understanding of strengths and

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areas for improvement. Recent changes to the organisation of the senior leadership team, however, have placed a greater demand upon the headteacher to undertake most of the monitoring and evaluation activities. There is a need for the leadership work to be distributed at all levels, so that she can be supported in ensuring that self-evaluation continues to accurately inform the development work of the school. Consequently, the school has satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise standards in writing and mathematics throughout the school, by:
 - ensuring that attendance improves
 - providing pupils with more independent learning activities.
- To ensure that all teaching is consistently good, by:
 - ensuring that marking is consistently used to inform pupils of how to improve their work
 - using the school's data more effectively, to ensure that activities are more closely matched to meet the individual needs of pupils.
- To improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - distributing leadership across the school, in order to support the headteacher more in undertaking the school's self-evaluation activities
 - governors becoming more involved in evaluating the work of the school so that they are more informed in order to support and challenge the school's work.
- 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**

In most lessons, pupils enjoy learning and are eager to extend their knowledge and skills. Pupils make better progress in lessons where the activities are matched to meet their needs, but where this is less effective, pupils do not always sustain their concentration.

Across the school, pupils are making good progress in reading. Pupils have an opportunity to borrow books from the attractive library, and there is an emphasis upon developing their reading skills. The school provides appropriate interventions for pupils who are not making the expected progress in reading. Although the school has focused upon developing writing skills, the progress of pupils in different classes is variable, and is thus satisfactory overall. Pupils make less progress in mathematics because the teachers' plans do not always take sufficient account of pupils' prior knowledge and understanding. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and are well supported by trained assistants. Although their progress is satisfactory, this is improving. More able pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons.

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However, the school has introduced 'challenge plans' and an intervention group, which is helping pupils who have been identified as gifted and talented mathematicians to attain higher standards. Overall, pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy working with information and communication technology and through their work on business enterprise, they are developing skills which will enable them to access the next stage of their education.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils show a good understanding of how to respect and help others, exemplified by their recent charity work in response to the earthquake in Haiti. They learn about different faiths and traditions, as a result of the school extending their awareness of life in a multi-cultural society. Pupils are provided with opportunities to reflect about religious beliefs, as seen in an outstanding assembly led by the headteacher, where pupils considered the importance of religious symbols and images. Pupils work and play harmoniously, and the work of the peer mediators help them to learn about resolving conflicts.

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	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	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

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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Teachers adopt a range of teaching styles and use information and communication technology well, in order to engage pupils in their learning. As a result of teachers sharing their lesson intentions, pupils know what they are learning and what is expected of them. Consequently, pupils waste little time in commencing their work and they are keen to do well. Teachers' use of assessment information, however, is inconsistent. In the better lessons, this is used well to meet the different needs of pupils, whereas, in the majority of lessons, this was not as accurate. The more able pupils in particular, were provided with similar work to that of other pupils, or this had to be undertaken before commencing more challenging tasks. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always provide pupils with the information they need to know in order to improve their work.

Since the last inspection, the school has introduced a curriculum which is based upon developing key skills. They have recently added a creative dimension to this approach and have devised topics which engage pupils in their learning. This has been enriched through the school's work on partnerships. For example, pupils are involved in performing arts linked to Wakefield Theatre, as well as undertaking learning in school through the 'grow it' project, which is part of the 'Open Futures Partnership'. A key dimension in the school's curriculum is that of 'raising aspiration' for pupils, exemplified by the display in the entrance hall, which shows the success of former pupils in the world of work. The school provides a breakfast club which is enjoyed by pupils.

The school has good arrangements in place to ensure that all pupils are cared for well. It works well with other agencies to provide strong support for potentially vulnerable pupils, helping them to overcome barriers to learning. There are good procedures in place in order to help children settle into the school, and this is continued as pupils move between classes. There are good links with the two local secondary schools, and pupils are involved in a range of activities and visits, to ensure that they enjoy a smooth transition into Key Stage 3.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Since the last inspection, senior leaders have monitored the quality of provision, as well as tracking the progress and attainment of pupils more assiduously. This has helped leaders to have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and to devise appropriate plans for improvement. These have become increasingly focused upon

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pursuing their ambition to improve pupils' attainment. For example, senior leaders have introduced pupils' progress meetings, whereby, the progress of each pupil is considered in terms of their academic and personal development. This is helping to secure accountability across the school. Although this has been successful, at present, there is a need for the work involved in the self-evaluation process not to be carried out solely by the headteacher, but shared between staff. Governors support the school and are aware of its strengths and areas for improvement. However, the governors need to be involved in the checks made on the work of the school. This will ensure that they are in a more informed position in order to support and challenge the school, particularly with regard to standards and the progress pupils make. Governors and senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures are robust and that all statutory requirements were in place at the time of the inspection.

The school has undertaken an analysis of its context and demonstrates that it is effective in promoting community cohesion. The school ensures that pupils and families have access to support and provision, both within and beyond the school day. This is now embedded into the culture of the school, and it is seen as an organisation at the heart of its community. For example, the school hosts a range of family learning courses for parents. This is indicative of the good partnership the school enjoys with parents and carers. In addition to the two parents' evenings held each year and a written annual report, the 'open-door' approach enables parents to visit school at any time in order to discuss their children's academic progress and personal development. Parents and carers are kept informed of the life of the school through the interesting newsletters and are provided with leaflets which detail the ways in which they can support their child at home. The school ensures that all pupils are treated fairly and have an equal chance of success, for example, the school is placing remedial actions in place in order to tackle the past underperformance of a group of girls.

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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money

3

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Early Years Foundation Stage is a strength of the school. The clear direction of the newly appointed leader is building upon previous strengths within the unit, in order to provide a stimulating and caring environment in which children can thrive.

Transition arrangements are good and children settle well into the unit. Children are cared for well and their welfare is paramount. Children behave well and they respond positively to the attractive and well-organised learning environment. Both the indoor and outdoor provision successfully promote learning in all areas of the curriculum.

Staff undertake regular assessments which help them to have an accurate picture of the progress which the children are making. They use these assessments to plan appropriate learning activities, which strike a good balance between those which are led by the adults and those which are initiated by the child. The children are given targets for their learning, which they know and can talk about. Although children enter Nursery with skills that are well below expectations, they make good progress, with some children making exceptional progress. In particular, the emphasis upon communication, language and literacy, is helping children to rapidly improve their skills in these areas of learning.

The staff work closely as a team and have developed a monthly action plan for improvement. Although staff have established good relationships with parents and carers, one of the areas for development is to involve them more in their children's learning. The staff team are aware of the need to improve some aspects of provision, particularly in developing learning outdoors.

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	2

Views of parents and carers

The vast majority of parents and carers, who made their views known to inspectors through the inspection questionnaires, are happy with their children's experience at Ash Grove Junior and Infant School. Any concerns raised from the questionnaires were taken into consideration during the inspection. A very small minority of parents and carers

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expressed concerns regarding how well they were informed of their children's progress. Inspectors found that the school provides sufficient opportunity through parents' evenings, annual reports and through its 'open door approach', to enable parents and carers to be informed of their children's academic and personal development.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ash Grove Junior and Infant 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 276 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	28	51	26	47	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	27	49	25	45	3	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	40	24	44	7	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	40	29	53	4	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	45	29	53	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	36	30	55	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	42	28	51	2	4	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)	23	42	25	45	3	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	42	28	51	2	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	33	28	51	4	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	19	35	30	55	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	23	42	25	45	4	7	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	25	45	26	47	3	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



4 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ash Grove Junior and Infant School, Pontefract, WF9 2TF

Thank you for being so helpful and friendly when we inspected your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and looking at your work. The support you gave inspectors has helped me to write the report.

In the report, I have said that your school is satisfactory overall, but it has some good features. We found that the teachers and adults take good care of you and they make sure that you feel safe.

We saw how much you enjoyed coming to school and spending time with your friends. You behave well and enjoy learning and playing with each other. During your lessons, you listen well and try your best. The school has planned interesting learning activities for you to do. Teachers are helping you to make steady progress, although this is better in reading than in writing and mathematics. They do not always make the learning challenging enough, especially for those who can learn at a faster rate. We saw how much you understood about being healthy and the ways in which you help school, through the school council, peer mediators and playground buddies. The leaders of the school are keen for you to do well. To help them to do as well as it can for you, I have asked leaders and teachers to make sure that:

- you do really well in your writing and mathematics
- your learning is never too easy or too difficult
- teachers provide more detailed comments in their marking, to show you how to improve
- everyone comes to school as much as possible
- more adults help your headteacher to look at how well the school is doing.

You can help by making sure that you always try your best and that you continue to enjoy coming to school every day.

Yours sincerely,

David Carter

Lead Inspector

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