

Ashwood Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103818
Local Authority	Dudley
Inspection number	348877
Inspection dates	16–17 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Ceri Morgan HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rev Colin Jones
Headteacher	Mr Steve Hudson
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors. They observed every teacher and 21 lessons in total. A full range of meetings took place between inspectors and senior leaders in school, the headteacher, two members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority and subject leaders. Short discussions were also held with every teacher and the manager of the resource base for the deaf based in the school. Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' work, key school documentation and examples of teachers' planning. On this inspection no pupil or staff surveys were distributed as the visit was conducted under Section 8 of the Education Act. However, a questionnaire was issued to parents and carers. Inspectors received 174 responses.

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

- the progress made on the areas for improvement identified when the school entered special measures
- the quality of teaching and its impact on raising pupils' achievement
- the impact of changes to leadership and management on current provision
- the current curriculum
- the performance of boys in English and that of more-able pupils in all subjects.

Information about the school

Ashwood Park Primary School is a larger-than-average size primary school serving an area which is socially and economically diverse. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, with very few pupils at the early stages of learning English. The school hosts the local authority's Resource Base for the deaf, which accounts for an above average proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. However, the proportion of pupils with special educational and/or disabilities is average overall, as is the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The school has Early Years Foundation Stage provision, wrap-around care, and before- and after-school clubs all managed by the governing body. The school was placed in special measures in May 2009. Currently the school holds no external 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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school no longer requires special measures. It now provides a satisfactory education.

The school has continued to improve over the last year and is now satisfactory in all aspects with some emerging elements of good practice. This improvement is seen through a clearer focus on pupils' progress and attainment, improved teaching, secure and proactive leadership and better use of performance data. These key improvements are noticed by the pupils who describe the school as 'a different place from when we went into special measures'. As a result of this new focus pupils' attainment is broadly average and achievement is satisfactory and improving. It is an inclusive school where pupils show considerable respect and kindness towards each other, particularly when working together. Behaviour is good and attitudes to learning are often exemplary. Pupils are proud of their school. They are kept safe and, as a caring and inclusive school, helped to understand the needs of others although less so the beliefs and cultures of others. Pupils who attend the specialist unit for pupils with hearing impairment are integrated fully into classes.

Pupils recognise that the school has emerged from difficult times. They are convinced that they are now 'learning more' and that life is also much more focussed and fun than previously. Adults in school express the same feelings. Although much of the work of the school could now be considered satisfactory there is a clear trajectory of improvement under a re-galvanised leadership team, much improved teaching and an effective system for tracking and improving pupils' progress.

Although standards achieved and pupils' progress are both now satisfactory, they are inconsistent with particular weaknesses in writing and mathematics in some classes. Some groups of pupils, notably boys in literacy and more-able pupils are capable of more but a satisfactory but uninspiring curriculum caps their potential. There is a lack of sparkle about some of the activities pupils are asked to do that limits their enjoyment.

Leadership and management has a clarity of purpose and is increasingly rigorous in the steps required to take following monitoring of the school's work. Teaching is satisfactory overall but with some emerging strengths and much that is good or better. The school has had to cope with some significant changes to personnel, often beyond its control, but thoughtful and effective management is securing good improvement despite these changes. The quality of self-evaluation and monitoring is satisfactory and generally accurate but occasionally lacks a precise focus. Much of the school's documentation is new and incomplete. This is a key priority for improvement to ensure that systematic

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evaluation is effective.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work by a sharper focus on what is being monitored and why. This can be achieved by:
 - ensuring key school documentation has greater clarity and more precise use of targets and improvement measures
 - involving governors and the wider leadership team in evaluating all aspects of pupils' progress, teaching quality and school improvement.
- Improve the curriculum by instigating
 - more creativity and imaginative activity designed to increase challenge and enjoyment
 - a greater level of challenge to more- able pupils and boys in literacy
 - more frequent opportunities to write at length in all subjects.
- Improve pupils' progress to good and attainment to above average in writing and mathematics by increasing the proportion of good teaching yet further.
- Better promote community cohesion by extending pupil's understanding of other faiths and the cultural richness in British and global society.
- 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

Pupils now make satisfactory progress in all subjects and reach average levels of attainment. This represents a considerable improvement over the last year. Children enter school with levels that are in line with expectations for their age and, after a good start in the nursery, continue to make satisfactory progress throughout school. Nevertheless this big picture of satisfactory progress masks some variations in performance. Progress is stronger in the nursery and Year 6 following a slight dip in Years 3 and 4. Similarly standards vary between subjects. Reading is better than writing. Standards in mathematics vary between classes. Too few pupils reach the higher levels in mathematics and English. Girls usually outperform boys, especially in literacy skills, although there are some classes where the trend is reversed. Partly as a consequence of underdeveloped literacy skills in previous years, boys in the older classes have weaker writing skills than could be expected. Despite improvement recently this gap is not closing rapidly enough. The school's data show that around 80% of pupils will reach the expected levels in 2010 and about 22% will reach the higher levels. Although these are acceptable levels of performance, the school is aware that they could be improved yet further, particularly for more able pupils.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or difficulties also make satisfactory progress. The pupils who attend the resource base for the deaf are integrated well into

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mainstream classes where appropriate. They are usually supported by specialist teachers working alongside the main class teacher, helping them to make good progress.

Pupils say they feel very safe and the school makes sure they are aware of any potential risks. A very positive attitude to physical activity, a good range of sports clubs and a healthy option 'salad bar' available at lunchtimes, contributes to pupils having a detailed understanding of how to keep healthy. This is supplemented by appropriate teaching sessions on drugs awareness. Pupils look after each other well. They say that there is no bullying or racism and any small falling out is easily resolved by adults. There is, for example, a popular club where pupils learn sign language so they can communicate with their friends who attend the deaf unit.

Pupils contribute to the community by supporting charitable and social events in the local community although not enough is yet done to encourage and respond to parental opinion. Their social skills and understanding of morality is good but their understanding of alternative cultures and faiths, although improving, is not extensive. Given the delightful behaviour of many pupils and very inclusive ethos in school there is a surprising absence of spirituality evident. Assemblies and lessons miss opportunities to enhance this aspect of pupils' development. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. Together with improving literacy skills, these help prepare pupils for the next phase of life and eventual employment.

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	3

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

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The extent to which pupils 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	3

How effective is the provision?

Teaching quality has improved dramatically over the last year because of a collective effort to involve pupils more in their own learning allied to good additional support from partnerships with other schools and the local authority. Much is now good with occasional examples of outstanding practice. However this improvement has not yet translated into above average progress. The school has embarked on a scheme where teachers are partnered with colleagues who have different skills and who teach a different age range. This is helping all staff to have a better awareness of the progress pupils make across the whole school.

Some consistent strengths in teaching include good relationships with pupils in most classes, good use of resources and sharing clear objectives so pupils know what they are doing and why. More frequent opportunities for discussion in lessons are helping to improve language skills although teachers sometimes dominate the sessions by taking too long introducing topics. This limits the time available for pupils to work on extended activities and is a contributory factor for weaker writing skills.

A key improvement is the way pupils are involved in assessing their own work by the 'two stars and a wish' system. This is implemented fully across the school and pupils take it seriously, giving themselves a star if they have achieved something specific and a wish for their next step. This has helped them become very evaluative about their own work. This technique, coupled with the use of a 'steps to success' system of marking is used to give clearer guidance about what is required to improve work. Marking is constructive and up to date although less so for the limited amount of homework set.

Some inconsistencies in teaching persist. The use of interactive whiteboards, although commonplace, is unimaginative. Some timing is loose, leading to confusion by pupils about what is expected by when. Although teachers are more precise in their use of vocabulary and questioning than previously, many still use complex sentences unnecessarily and accept clipped answers from pupils rather than insisting on better replies. This particularly restricts the thinking and explanation of more-able pupils.

The curriculum is appropriately balanced with an emphasis on language and numeracy. The introduction of additional reading opportunities and the Big Write initiative are popular with pupils. It is enhanced with a good range of clubs, visits and visitors. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed pirate day and the school recognises that more of these kinds of activities are required to make the curriculum more attractive and engaging for pupils with more time spent on practical investigative and problem- solving activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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<p>The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning</p>	3
	3
<p>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</p>	3
<p>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</p>	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has established a fresh sense of direction under the high-quality leadership of the current headteacher. This has been welcomed by pupils and adults alike. Leadership is secure and effective with a clear vision. The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, makes decisions with integrity and manages relationships well. He has gained the support of the wider school community and pupils. He is supported by a hard working and rapidly developing leadership team. The use of increasingly accurate data about pupils' progress is helping make all adults more accountable for their subjects or classes. This is increasing the capacity to sustain the current improvements being made. The role of subject managers has greater clarity and is working well. However, some recent monitoring is a little ad hoc. Documentation is embryonic. It lacks detail which makes evaluation less effective. Good teamwork is now established and coordinators increasingly accept responsibility for feedback which is completed with honest evaluation.

The effective governing body has strengthened its expertise with the addition of new members. Members are visible throughout school and offers appropriate challenge in discussions. Governors have ensured safeguarding is good and the school meets all statutory requirements. The school makes considerable efforts to ensure good welfare of pupils who attend. Safeguarding records and staff training are up to date and effective. Increasingly, leadership in school is forward looking and recognises some difficult decisions will need to be taken in the future about the budget. The value for money currently evident is satisfactory.

The school places a high value on equality of opportunity between different ethnic groups and for pupils with additional disabilities but an awareness of the relative performance of these groups is only just emerging. The school works well with a full range of partners and has recently built links with other partner schools for specific improvement purposes. The promotion of community cohesion is satisfactory as wider understanding of global issues and any evaluation or planning of appropriate activities is evident but very sketchy.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	3
	3

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	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 enter school with skills that are broadly in line with expectations for their age. They are below this in communication and language. They make good progress across the six areas of learning because of good planning and teaching. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes enjoy school and play well together indoors and outdoors. They behave well and quickly settle into the calm, purposeful atmosphere. There is an appropriate balance of adult-led and child initiated activities. Staff encourage children to be independent and they make good progress with their speaking and reading skills. Relationships with parents and carers are good and they are kept well-informed of their children's progress. Children are safe, well-cared for and have an increasing awareness of how to make healthy choices. There is good provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They are supported effectively and fully included in activities. Provision for the outdoor area of learning is good. Children enjoy planting vegetables and building dens. They confidently balance on apparatus and crawl through tunnels. Their independent learning skills and language skills are developed well as they role play in their supermarket. The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and there are good systems in place for recording children's progress.

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

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Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents responding to the inspection questionnaire strongly support the school and recognise and appreciate the improvements being made. They value the openness of current leadership. Despite this there were occasional concerns expressed regarding homework and the sharing of information with home and school. Inspectors agree that more frequent and useful homework could be set and that the school does not always provide enough opportunity for parents to discuss their own children's progress with teachers. The school's leaders recognise this and are now keen to develop this area of work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashwood Park 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 inspector received 174 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 338 pupils registered at the school. Not all respondents answered every question and percentages have been rounded. Statements Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree Total % Total % Total % Total % My child enjoys school 89 52 74 43 6 4 2 1 The school keeps my child safe 106 62 65 38 0 0 0 0 The school informs me about my child's progress 57 33 100 58 13 8 1 1 My child is making enough progress at this school 55 32 98 57 14 8 2 1 The teaching is good at this school 57 33 96 56 15 9 0 0 The school helps me to support my child's learning 49 29 100 58 20 12 0 0 The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle 55 32 107 63 6 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) 49 29 101 59 10 6 0 0 The school meets my child's particular needs 60 35 96 56 9 5 1 1 The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour 53 31 90 53 18 11 3 2 The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns 43 25 112 65 11 6 2 1 The school is led and managed effectively 69 40 92 54 6 4 0 0 Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school 79 46 77 45 11 6 2 1

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%.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Parental questionnaires are not normally distributed for inspections conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005, unless inspectors have specific reasons to request that the school does so.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



18 June 2010

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Ashwood Park Primary School, Stourbridge, DY8 5DJ

You will remember that inspectors have been visiting your school regularly to see what progress has been made since your school was placed in special measures in May 2009. I am writing to tell you that, as a result of the hard work of adults and pupils alike, and as a consequence of the improvements made, your school is no longer in special measures. It is now satisfactory and improving.

This is partly due to your hard work in attending well and trying your best in lessons. We were very impressed with your attitude to learning and general behaviour. Your teachers care for you and those in charge have a clear idea about what still needs to be improved. As a result the school is in safe hands.

As in all schools there are some things that could still be improved. We have asked the school to make lessons more exciting and stimulating for all, but especially the more able pupils and boys. We have also asked them to put more detail in the school plans - this will make it easier to check on what works well and what needs changing more efficiently. We also believe that, although standards are improving, there is no reason why they could not be even higher, especially in writing and mathematics. We have asked the school to give you more opportunities to learn about the beliefs and cultures of others.

I would like to thank you all for taking time to give us your views and to wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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