

Ashcott Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123678
Local Authority	Somerset
Inspection number	359483
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	John Laver

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	115
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Evans
Headteacher	Richard Briar
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. During the inspection, nine lessons were observed and four teachers seen. Inspectors observed the school's work, and held meetings with pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school improvement plan, reports from the school improvement partner, minutes of governing body meetings and assessment data on pupils' recent and current progress. An inspector attended an assembly. In addition to observing the school's work, inspectors analysed 55 parental questionnaires, 60 pupil questionnaires and 16 staff questionnaires.

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

- How well the school is improving attainment and progress, particularly in English and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The extent to which developments in the curriculum and improvements in teaching are having a positive impact on achievement and progress.
- The effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring and promoting school improvement.
- The progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Information about the school

The overwhelming majority of pupils in this smaller than average village school are from a White British background. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, which include a range of moderate and severe learning difficulties and emotional needs, is broadly average. Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage in a class which also contains some Year 1 pupils. All classes contain pupils of different ages. The headteacher had been in post for just over six months at the time of the inspection. The school caters for a small number of Traveller families. The school has Healthy School status, the Geography Quality Mark, the Active Mark and the International School Award. It is a Links into Languages centre for spreading good practice in the teaching of modern foreign languages.

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

Ashcott Primary School provides a good standard of education. It has some outstanding features, notably the high quality of pupils' personal development. The school has improved considerably since its previous inspection. The new leadership team, in place for only six months, has put in place several strategies to build on those already implemented after the previous inspection. Although several of these strategies are not yet fully embedded, they are having a positive impact on pupils' progress. The headteacher has successfully transmitted his desire for excellence to all staff. Parents and carers recognise this, and are very supportive of the school. A typical parental comment was: 'It will be a sad day when my son has to leave this school.' Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They feel very safe and make a very strong contribution to the school and wider communities, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils' academic progress is not at the same level as their personal development, although it has improved considerably since the 2009 national test results. Pupils now leave Year 6 with above average standards overall. A small minority of pupils, mainly boys, do not make good progress in writing. The school recognises this, and has implemented several strategies which are beginning to have a positive impact on boys' writing across a range of subjects.

The great majority of pupils enjoy coming to school from the moment they join the Early Years Foundation Stage. Their good progress begins at this point and is maintained throughout the school. Pupils are enthusiastic about the curriculum, especially the topics, which effectively develop pupils' skills and also their knowledge of the wider world. Pupils benefit from the inclusive ethos of the school and the outstanding care, guidance and support that underpin their personal development. Good teaching is typically characterised by excellent classroom management and an emphasis on pupils learning actively and independently, although there is not always enough challenge for a small minority of more able pupils. Pupils do not receive sufficient information from marking, and there is not enough precise use of their targets or other forms of feedback to show how they can further improve their work.

The school's own evaluation of its strengths and areas for development is accurate and its strategic planning is focused well on the right priorities to take the school further forward. Monitoring of teaching and learning is now more systematic and rigorous. These strengths, together with a good record of improvement since the previous inspection, mean that the school has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attainment in boys' writing by building on strategies to improve their writing skills.

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- Ensure that teachers' feedback to pupils throughout the school gives all pupils, but especially those who are most able, a clear idea of how to raise their attainment to the next level.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Because this is a small school, attainment on entry tends to vary considerably from year to year, but broadly meets age-related expectations. Throughout the school, pupils learn well in lessons, reflecting good teaching and pupils' own very positive attitudes towards school. By Year 6, attainment is above average and pupils demonstrate good progress, except for a small minority of boys in writing. In a typically good lesson observed during the inspection, pupils were taught about dental hygiene. The teacher did this in a lively and practical way which made the learning fun. Teaching assistants give good support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who also learn well as a result. The pace of learning only flags occasionally, usually when tasks become less challenging or the teacher puts less emphasis on independent learning.

Pupils love the school. They not only behave outstandingly well in and out of lessons, but they also get on with each other very well. They feel very secure and learn collaboratively. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, with a good take-up of sport and other activities like the gardening club. Most attend school regularly and feel very well cared for. Overall attendance is affected by the frequent absences of a small minority of pupils, mainly from mobile Traveller families, although the school does its utmost to bring these children into school regularly and punctually. When they are at school, they make the same good progress as their classmates. Pupils develop good enterprise skills in various ways, for example in managing charity events, and they confidently represent the school in outside events. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community. Within school, they run the 'gems' or house activities and have a valued school council. Pupils' cultural development is particularly strong. Music is a strength of the school, with a high take-up of instrumental tuition and a very successful and popular choir. Pupils have a strongly developed understanding of the wider world, for example through their topic work on Kenya.

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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	2
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	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers are very successful in managing classes in which pupils have a range of ages, abilities and needs. Established class routines contribute to the outstanding behaviour, keeping pupils well focused and promoting good learning. In the best lessons, teaching is lively, and briskly paced planned activities promote independent, active learning and the development of good research skills. This was evident, for example, when older pupils worked on a project to create a film about their village, designed for foreign visitors. By this means, pupils developed their skills in French as well as their communication and technical skills. It was typical of an innovative approach which encourages pupils to explore topics in depth, often with an international dimension. Only occasionally does the pace of learning slow, when more able pupils are not challenged early enough to produce their best work, and a small minority of pupils would like more precise information on how they can take their work to the next level.

The curriculum is designed to provide topics which engage pupils' enthusiasm and encourage transferable skills. It provides a rich vein of cultural experiences: for example, over half of the school's pupils are in the choir. All pupils benefit from outstanding care and support. Teaching assistants play an effective role in lessons, working from helpful individual education plans and using a range of strategies to ensure that potentially underachieving pupils or those with specific special educational needs make good progress. A recent success of the school has been the creation of regular pupil progress

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meetings at which every pupil's progress is evaluated and their future learning needs assessed, so that teachers are also now more accountable for progress. The school works hard to encourage the small number of poor attenders into school, and has strong and effective links with outside agencies to support such initiatives.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The relatively new leadership team has had a good impact on improving teaching and pupils' progress. They have been successful in communicating their high expectations to staff and ambitions for the future. Although currently subject leaders have limited opportunities to monitor teaching and provide opportunities for teachers to share good practice they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the subjects they manage. The governing body carries out its role effectively. Governors are knowledgeable and strongly support the leadership's drive for excellence. Because the headteacher's own monitoring is rigorous and there are good systems in place to track pupils' progress, all staff are well aware of every pupil's needs. The school communicates well with parents and carers, involving them in their children's learning, for example in giving them information sessions about internet safety. Productive links with other schools in the local learning cluster provide additional sporting opportunities and make use of expertise from local schools. Ashcott Primary is recognised for its success in integrating the teaching of modern foreign languages into the curriculum, and for its outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The school community is highly cohesive with pupils from different backgrounds getting on exceptionally well with each other. The small group of traveller pupils for example are very well integrated. Not only are pupils fully engaged in the local community, for example in charity work, but they also have a strong awareness of different cultures developed through their overseas links. The school is very inclusive, with no discrimination; every pupil is valued and given the encouragement and support to succeed. Safeguarding procedures are robust, and both staff and pupils are very conscious of appropriate procedures, for example when using computers.

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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
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

The current Reception group joined with levels of knowledge and skills that were above expectations for their age. Children make good progress in acquiring language and communication skills and in personal, social and creative development. The transition from pre-school, with which there are excellent links, is managed very smoothly. Children are taught well; their interests are taken into account when the Early Years Foundation Stage leader plans the curriculum, although the planning takes limited account of the difficulties some children experience with numeracy skills. Most of the time, children are given good scope to develop their initiative and independence. This was seen to good effect when pupils were constructively engaged in activities ranging from working collaboratively on counting games on the computer to dressing up and role play, all within the same session, and on another occasion when children were learning about word sounds and numbers using product labels. Although the leader assesses the children's progress thoroughly, the children themselves are not always clear about what they are learning and what the next steps for improvement might be, and so staff sometimes miss opportunities to move to the next step of learning. Provision for outside activities has improved since the previous inspection, although children are not always able to access the outdoor area independently in order to learn through free-flow play. Children feel very safe and well cared for. They learn well alongside Year 1 pupils, with whom relationships are good. There are good links with parents and carers, who regard Reception as one of the strengths of the school. The effectiveness of the leadership and teaching is evident in the fact that by the time children begin Year 1, they are well on the way to meeting the expected learning goals, and are confident, articulate individuals.

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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 proportion of parents and carers who returned questionnaires was above average, and most were very positive about all aspects of their children's experiences of school. They praised both the care and support given to their children and the progress which their children make. A typical comment was, 'We have been really happy with the "whole-child" ethos.' Parents and carers praise the staff's commitment: 'We feel very lucky to have had such hard-working, committed people looking after our children. Teachers are always prepared to do that little bit extra for them.' They also praise the headteacher's 'hands-on' attitude, emphasising his approachability and emphasis on good communications between home and school. A very small number of parents expressed individual concerns about how behaviour is managed, the extent to which their children enjoy school and the extent to which they make good progress. Inspectors followed up their concerns, but judged that behaviour is outstanding and that the great majority of pupils love the school and make good progress.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashcott 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 115 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	45	82	8	15	2	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	69	15	27	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	31	56	17	31	3	5	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	38	69	13	24	2	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	37	67	15	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	36	65	16	29	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	33	60	18	33	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	41	75	9	16	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	40	73	12	22	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	53	20	36	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	47	21	38	3	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	36	65	12	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	43	78	7	13	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 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 pupils' 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.



9 November 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashcott Primary School, Bridgwater TA7 9PP

Thank you for your friendly welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you in lessons and in other activities such as assemblies. We know that you really like your school, you enjoy your lessons, especially when they are fun, and you behave really well. We agree with you that you do some very interesting things in lessons, such as making films about your village. Your school gives you a good education. The headteacher leads the school well. All your teachers and other staff work hard and look after you very well, so that you feel safe and very well cared for. You make good progress in your lessons, and get better results than pupils in the school used to. However, a few of you, mainly boys, do not do as well in your writing as you should. Although most of you do well in the school, and know what your targets are, you do not always get the exact information you need to help you improve your work even more.

In order for you do even better in your work, we have asked the school to do two things:

- Find ways to improve the writing of the few pupils who do not do as well as they should, so you get better results in your English.
- Make sure that teachers give you more information in your books and use your targets to show you exactly how well you have done, and how you can improve your work even more.

You can help your teachers to make sure that you do really well by continuing to work hard.

Thank you again for your welcome, and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Laver

Lead inspector

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