

Ashton Hayes Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111109
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310503
Inspection date	29 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Bamber

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 on roll	
School	132
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pauline Tilly
Headteacher	Mr R Ford
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Church Road Ashton Hayes Chester Cheshire CH3 8AB
Telephone number	1829 751418
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Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and particularly investigated achievement and standards, how well pupils are cared for, supported and guided in their personal and academic development, aspects of teaching and learning and the curriculum, especially in mixed age classes. The role and impact of governors was also a focus. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies, minutes and other documentation; observation of the school at work; discussions with members of staff, pupils, the governors and a group of parents and the questionnaires returned by parents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Many pupils who attend this smaller than average village school come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who speak English as an additional language or have learning difficulties and/or disabilities are all much lower than normal. In contrast, the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is higher than average. The school has a number of awards including, the basic Skills Quality Mark, Inclusion Quality Mark, National Healthy School status and the Activemark, which is awarded to schools that promote pupils' physical development particularly well.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school in which most pupils achieve well and reach well above average standards by the time they leave Year 6. They behave very well in lessons and have positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum offers pupils many opportunities to acquire good basic skills, to develop as useful and concerned young citizens and to practise a healthy lifestyle. Underpinning this success, is good overall teaching, a perceptive and competent leadership team and supportive well focused governors.

Over the last five years, teachers' assessments and national test results indicate that standards have been consistently well above average in English, mathematics and science, in both Year 2 and in Year 6. Pupils' overall achievement is good and improving. There is some variation in the progress different year groups make, which is linked to the quality of teaching. For example, pupils' progress is only satisfactory in the lower junior classes because teaching sometimes lacks focus or the work set does not fully match all pupils' needs. There is some outstanding teaching in Years 1 and 2 and in Year 6 which accelerates pupils' progress. Pupils report that they enjoy most of their lessons and, 'that teachers give them lots of help and go over things so that they learn them well'. They enjoy and thrive on opportunities to work cooperatively and to use information and communication technology (ICT) to aid their learning. While these opportunities are plentiful in some classes and lessons, pupils in general are given too few opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning or to assess the degree to which they are improving aspects of their work. This relative weakness in their learning and the fact that the children's committee is not fully in charge of its own affairs, are the main reasons why pupils' overall personal development is good rather than outstanding as the school judges. Teachers make good use of ICT to make lessons interesting and the school has made good strides since the last inspection in improving both teachers' and pupils' skills with computers and other media. In most lessons, pupils of all abilities are well challenged, encouraged to work conscientiously and systematically, and expected to respond at length to well focused questions. These positive qualities promote pupils' good achievement.

The warm relationships evident throughout the school add value to pupils' learning and lead to them feeling well looked after and safe. Teaching assistants, who support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are skilled and effective. Their invaluable support promotes these pupils' good achievement well. This is much praised by parents and the part played by teaching assistants in ensuring that all pupils in the school are actively included in all that the school's provides is significant. That is not to say that all parents are fully satisfied with the school. A significant minority of parents have concerns about the impact on children's progress of a lack of continuity in teaching staff. While the school has coped with these issues well, minimising any disruption to pupils' learning, it has been less successful in reaching out to and reassuring those parents who have concerns.

The curriculum promotes well both pupils' academic and personal development. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are taught effectively. The arrangements in place to help pupils become effective young members of society enable them to form positive relationships, to care for each other and their environment and to take a moral stance. The wide range of visits, visitors and after-school clubs provide many opportunities for pupils to develop well spiritually, socially and culturally. Pupils' involvement with the local community in its initiative to become the first village in the United Kingdom to be 'carbon neutral' is testament to their ecological awareness.

The headteacher and his deputy headteacher have a firm grasp on what the school does well and where it needs to improve. The rigorous systems used to check on pupils' progress and the school's overall performance are effective in identifying where extra support is required for both pupils and staff. For example, because there were some concerns about how well pupils in Years 3 to 6 were progressing within the mixed age classes, the school has trialed a reorganisation of morning sessions so that pupils are taught English and mathematics in single age groups. Action is also being taken to address some relative weaknesses in teaching in the lower junior classes.

The school knows itself well it and has a good capacity to improve further. Leaders have also established good partnerships with the local community, with other schools and with the local authority. Pupils have benefited by becoming very environmentally aware and by having access to specialist teaching in physical education and in French. Also, their introduction to school at age four and their transfer to secondary school, at age eleven, are achieved very smoothly. The very good basic skills pupils acquire during their time in the school and their good attendance and punctuality prepare them well for their future. Governors provide specialist help to the school with many being actively involved in its day-to-day life.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children enter the school with skills above those expected for their age. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. Children are taught well and supported effectively. As a result, they make good progress. Parents understandably commend the well planned arrangements for settling their children in to the class and the quality of care they receive during their first year at school. The children enjoy a well balanced diet of both formal activities and play, both of which are well matched to their abilities. Regular and perceptive assessments enable adults to provide children with tasks that help them to make good progress in all areas of their learning. As a result, many enter Year 1 having at least reached the goals set for them and many exceed them. They make least progress in linking letters and sounds. Their physical development is hampered somewhat because of the relatively cramped outside area that restricts their use of large apparatus. In contrast, children progress very well in their personal and emotional development, in mathematics and in their knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

What the school should do to improve further

- To ensure that the quality of teaching and learning is consistently good in the lower junior classes.
- To provide pupils with more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and assessments.
- To make sure that the concerns of a significant minority of parents are addressed more fully.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Ashton Hayes Primary School, Chester, CH3 8AB

Thank you for the friendly welcome you gave me when I inspected your school recently. I enjoyed chatting to you about your work and hearing what you thought about how the school helps you to learn. You were right when you told me it is a good school.

In most lessons, you are well taught and those of you who have more difficulty learning or behaving well are helped a lot by the adults who work with you. You were keen to tell me that the visits you go on that are fun and interesting. Your work to help the village become carbon neutral shows how aware you are about the environment. Members of the children's committee obviously help the school to improve in certain ways, for example, in suggesting putting in the path to the woodland area. They also told me that they would like to have more say in running their own meetings. The school helps you to get on well with your work and by the time you go to secondary school you are doing better in English, mathematics and science than pupils in a lot of other schools. I was impressed by how well you behave and how keen you are to learn. You take part in sport really enthusiastically and have been awarded the Activemark-well done! Children in Reception have a good start and their parents really like the way they are helped to settle in to school.

Part of my job is to make suggestions about how the school can be even better. There are three things I have asked the school to do.

- To make sure that all your lessons are good.
- To let you have more choice in what you learn and to involve you in assessing your progress.
- Because some of your parents told me that they were worried about some things, for example, how many different teachers some of you have had. I have asked the school to talk to those parents to try to ease their worries.

Keep on working really hard and enjoying school.