

Ashton-under-Hill First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116650
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	312355
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Graeme Bassett

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–10
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	87
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Kendrick
Headteacher	Bryony Baynes
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Elmley Road Ashton-under-Hill Evesham WR11 7SW
Telephone number	01386 881333
Fax number	01386 882830

Age group	4-10
Inspection date	4 June 2008
Inspection number	312355

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This small village primary school, with three mixed-aged classes, draws most of its pupils from its immediate more advantaged neighbourhood. Pupils leave at the end of Year 5 to move to their secondary school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school has recently experienced significant staffing turbulence, including three different headteachers and the absence of one teacher since December 2007. The current headteacher took up her appointment in January 2007. The school has been awarded the Healthy Schools award and an ActiveMark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is steadily improving following a prolonged period of uncertainty caused by significant staffing turbulence. The leadership and management of the school are good overall because of high-quality leadership and management of the current headteacher. She has a very clear vision for the future development of the school but is currently the main driving force behind the many initiatives that have been set up to improve the quality of education. Some of the developments have already proved successful but others have not yet had enough time to show their full effect on raising standards and achievement further.

As a result of the headteacher's strong leadership, the quality of teaching is improving, the governing body is becoming purposefully involved in the monitoring procedures and responsibilities are being delegated sensitively to other staff. Other successes of the leadership and management are evident in the establishment of an enthusiastic team. There are particular strengths in the good pastoral care and support given to pupils because of the endeavours of all staff. This results in a caring environment where pupils' enjoyment of their work is excellent and where they look after each other extremely well. The successes so far show that the school has good capacity for future improvement.

With robust monitoring of the school's performance, classroom management is steadily improving and teaching is satisfactory overall. In Years 4 and 5, teaching is outstanding. There are signs of good practice and emerging strengths in Years 2 and 3. As a result, pupils' achievements are improving and the decline in standards experienced over the past two years at the end of Year 2 has been arrested. Nevertheless, standards in writing in Years 1 and 2 are still below average although reading standards have improved since last year and are now broadly average by the end of Year 2. Pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding by Year 5 are above the expected levels and although they have made rapid progress during Years 4 and 5, their achievement overall is satisfactory because of a dip in progress earlier in the school. The provision for the children in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory but often the planning of various activities does not emphasise sufficiently what skills, knowledge and understanding the children are to accomplish to ensure that each one builds competently upon their previous learning.

Teachers plan tasks that are interesting but some do not always design activities sufficiently well to meet the needs of all pupils within their mixed-aged classes. Often teachers' written comments do not give enough guidance to show pupils how to improve their work. As a result, most pupils do not understand how well they are doing.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good overall and some aspects are excellent. For example, they have a good awareness of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle and they make excellent contributions to the school and wider community. Their behaviour is exemplary and pupils show good levels of respect for all adults who they say 'make them feel good as soon as they enter school in the morning'. Their attendance is good and they have a good awareness of how to stay safe. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although their awareness of the cultural diversity of today's British society is not quite as strong as other aspects of their personal development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children enter the Foundation Stage with the skills expected for their age in most areas of learning but many have weaknesses in their communication, language and literacy development. The teaching is satisfactory overall but there are occasions when the activities are not devised carefully enough to identify exactly what the children are to learn. Consequently, progress, although satisfactory overall, is slower than expected for some children. By the time they enter Year 1, most of them reach the goals set for children of their age in their mathematical, physical and creative development. However, their levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for reading, writing and knowledge and understanding of the world are below the expected levels for their age. Good pastoral care, guidance and support ensure children are looked after well, remain safe and reach the goals set for their personal, social and emotional development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure tasks are challenging and meet the needs of all pupils more effectively.
- Raise standards in writing, especially by the end of Year 2.
- Ensure that activities in the Foundation Stage are specific enough to enable children to build upon their previous learning.
- Sharpen marking so that pupils understand what they need to do next to improve and are fully involved in assessing their personal targets.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted Inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards are currently above the expected levels by the end of Year 5 and achievement overall is satisfactory. Children enter school with the expected levels of skills, knowledge and understanding for their age but with weaknesses in reading and writing. By the time they enter Year 1, children make satisfactory progress and the majority attain the expected levels in most areas of learning although weaknesses remain in their literacy and language development.

Weaknesses in reading and writing continue throughout Years 1 and 2 and, over the past two years, standards at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics have fallen significantly. Despite recent improvements, standards in writing are still currently below average by Year 2. However, reading standards have improved well since last year, when they were below average, and are now broadly average. Standards in mathematics are now slightly above average. Standards in Year 5 are currently above the expected levels for their age in English and mathematics and are as expected in information and communication technology (ICT). They are making good progress in learning French. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their very good attitudes to learning. They say 'learning is interesting and fun and there are many other exciting things to do outside

of lessons'. The school council is fully involved in decision-making and all pupils are proud of the improvements that have been made to the learning environment, through attractive designs for redecoration of the doors as well as the outdoor play facilities and recently refurbished garden area. Pupils leave the school as mature, confident and articulate individuals with good personal skills. This, together with their satisfactory achievement, ensures that their preparation for the future is secure. However, their awareness of the cultural diversity of today's British society is not quite as strong as other aspects of their personal development.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is satisfactory overall but with good and often outstanding teaching in Years 4 and 5. Teachers' questioning techniques are developing well and most teachers encourage pupils to explain what they are thinking or how they are calculating answers. Planning in most instances is detailed and particularly good in the older class. However, some teachers do not make enough use of what they know about each pupil's achievements when they plan lessons. As a result, during some lessons, pupils are often not challenged enough and are all set the same task. Instances of this were observed, particularly in the introductory sessions, when older pupils were given the same task as the younger children in the class. The use of written comments to show pupils how to improve their work is not yet consistent throughout the school. Attractive displays of pupils' work, especially art, create a stimulating learning environment, which effectively celebrates pupils' successes and boosts their self-esteem.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

All subjects are covered adequately and although curriculum planning is satisfactory overall, it is often not defined precisely enough to take into account the needs of different ability groups within a class. Evidence in pupils' work shows that writing opportunities have been missed for pupils in Years 2 and 3 because of an overdependence on workbooks. These books are now being phased out and the curriculum is being changed to develop pupils' writing skills more effectively by linking subjects to create interest and enjoyment. For example, ICT is used well to develop reading and writing through its support of other subjects. Pupils particularly enjoy the practical activities in art, science and mathematics.

The good programme of personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils' personal development and their good understanding of staying safe, fit and healthy. The good range of after-school clubs and activities, including the residential visits and visitors to their classrooms, extend pupils' learning experiences effectively and help to develop new skills and talents.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The pastoral care and support given to pupils are good. Parents are involved effectively in their children's learning and many help within the classrooms. The family grouping system is especially effective in enabling pupils of all ages to work and play exceptionally well together during art week and similar events. An able team of teaching assistants, supported as necessary by outside agencies, provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This

ensures that these pupils are fully included in all activities. All systems for safeguarding pupils' health, safety and well-being are securely in place and meet current requirements.

Tracking records are in the early stages of development but are already being used well to identify and support children who are falling behind. Most pupils understand that they have challenging targets that show what they need to learn next but there are inconsistencies across the school because many of them are not involved enough in deciding when they have reached targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and management. Responsibilities are being distributed to other staff and governors but, as a small school, the headteacher is still the central figure in leading many areas of development. Under her robust direction, an analysis of the school's performance alerted governors, staff and the local authority to the fact that standards were falling and that many pupils in Years 1 to 3 were not doing as well as they should. This decline has been halted because of the rapid actions she instigated. The impact of these actions show that teaching is improving, with the establishment of whole-school records for tracking pupils' progress and imaginative involvement of staff and governors in setting targets for the future. The governing body is quickly becoming purposefully involved in the evaluation of the work of the school. For example, the governors have recently been involved in appointing additional teaching assistants and this is having a good impact upon raising standards. Together with staff, the governors are working well with the headteacher to compile a good self-evaluation of the school's work that is now forming the basis of challenging whole-school targets that are steadily raising standards.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

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	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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	3
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	3
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	3
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

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashton-under-Hill First School, Evesham WR11 7SW Thank you for helping us when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that your school is a caring place and that it provides you with a satisfactory education.

These are the things that are particularly strong in your school.

- Your headteacher leads and manages the school very well. She has very clear ideas of how to bring about improvements and as a result, your school is improving.
- The teaching is satisfactory overall. Some aspects of teaching in Years 2 and 3 are good and in the oldest class, it is excellent. The enjoyment that most of you have shown for your learning is outstanding.
- The staff care for and support you well.
- Most of you are developing very good attitudes towards your work and each other.
- You know a lot about keeping safe and you understand how to remain healthy.
- Your progress is improving and overall you make satisfactory progress. Most of the older pupils in Years 4 and 5 have made good progress this year.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to do these things.

- Make certain that you are set tasks in lessons that match your abilities, so that you do as well as you can and make good progress.
- Improve your standards in writing. especially in Year 2.
- Make certain that the activities that you are doing in the Foundation Stage are thought out clearly enough to make sure that you learn new things that build on what you can already do.
- Ensure that your teachers help you to understand how you can improve by making written comments in your books and involve you more in setting and reviewing your personal targets.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation. You can help even more by asking your teachers how you can make your work better.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Bassett Lead inspector