

Ashley Down Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108910
Local Authority	Bristol, City of
Inspection number	324861
Inspection date	29 April 2009
Reporting inspector	Colin Lee

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Claire Foxwell
Headteacher	Laurence Pitt
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2006
School address	Downend Road Horfield Bristol BS7 9PD
Telephone number	01173 772637
Fax number	01173 772637

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one additional inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- The impact of strategies to improve pupils' writing, especially by boys.
- How pupils' personal development and well-being have improved since the previous inspection.
- The impact of the school's new management structure on provision and pupils' achievement and standards.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with the headteacher, other staff, pupils and governors, and from the parental questionnaires. Lessons were observed, school self-evaluation and other documentation and samples of pupils' current and previous work were analysed. 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 the report.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than an average primary school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and the percentage from minority ethnic backgrounds is currently 28%. A wide range of nationalities is represented. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average and the range of these difficulties or disabilities is very broad.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. The vast majority of parents and carers think that it offers a very high quality of education for its pupils and they are right. The parent who told the inspector 'My children skip to school each day' was exemplifying the tremendous enjoyment and happiness that all pupils show in school. They have a love of learning that is fostered by skilled teaching, an exciting curriculum and the excellent care and support they receive. Standards are high and pupils of all abilities make rapid progress. This is due to many first-rate features in the quality of provision, and outstanding leadership and management.

Pupils join Year 3 with standards slightly above average in reading, writing and mathematics. They achieve outstandingly well so that, by the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science are well above the national average. Pupils' progress is tracked rigorously and teachers react promptly to situations where individuals or groups could be accelerated still further. For example, the emphasis placed in recent years on improving boys' writing has had marked impact on their enjoyment and standards.

The school sets very ambitious targets for all pupils and they happily rise to the challenge. This is primarily because they are taught so well. Many aspects of teaching are having a positive impact on the quality of learning. Pupils are given a series of short-term targets to work towards in reading, writing, and mathematics. These are in the form of 'I can' statements that give pupils a real sense of achievement and help them to develop very positive attitudes. No pupil ever experiences a sense of failure. They know their targets well and they are given opportunities at the end of lessons to record in their learning journals their achievement of a target. They are frequently asked to comment constructively on both their own and a partner's work and they do so by praising its strengths, suggesting how it can be improved, and saying if it shows achievement of a lesson's or a task's learning objective. By Year 6, these processes of self- and peer assessment are carried out with impressive maturity.

Teachers work closely together to plan lessons in year group teams. Within each class, teachers plan work that is carefully matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. Those pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities have excellent additional support and the intervention programmes introduced to meet special needs are highly successful. A priority has been placed on giving teachers a chance to see how the new curriculum is being taught in other classes and there is a strong desire amongst all teachers to learn from one another. Whilst the quality of learning is excellent overall, there is scope for it to be even better. This is because there are some variations between staff in their knowledge and understanding of how pupils learn best in different areas of learning, for example the physical and artistic. To date, there have been insufficient opportunities for teachers or teaching assistants to see the most effective practice in the school that ensures total consistency in the quality of learning. The school provides an extremely rich and varied curriculum. This is the result of a period of extensive curriculum development and change that has led to a stimulating programme of topics in which subjects are linked together. Pupils say how much they like this approach because it makes learning fun. Parents have been kept fully up to date with the changes and many have said how home life has been transformed by their children wanting to explore topics even more in their own time. Within this topic approach there remains a strong emphasis on ensuring that all pupils acquire core skills and many opportunities are planned for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills to be used in other subjects. Pupils are additionally taught thinking skills that help them to see how an activity helps them in many

ways, for example academically by improving their speaking and listening, or socially by developing their respect for others. The high levels of these skills for their age mean that the pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education and for their future economic well-being. An extensive range of activities is provided outside the school day. These are greatly enjoyed and high numbers participate in them. Many clubs give pupils an opportunity to make valuable contributions to the school community, such as the ECO club's determination to save energy and the media club's work on a school newspaper. The curriculum is also enhanced by a very good range of visits and visitors that provide first-hand experiences for pupils and have a significant impact on their learning.

The excellent provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education, coupled with the high quality of care, guidance and support that pupils receive, result in their outstanding personal development and well-being. Pupils look out for and care for one another, they behave superbly and all work hard to meet the high expectations of them. They have an excellent appreciation of healthy lifestyles. They also have a very mature understanding of how to keep safe in school and at home. Pupils appreciate the many opportunities they have to contribute to the school community. They talk with great pride about the national award they have received for their ECO work. They know that their opinions are valued and recognise that their very active, enthusiastic school council is a real driving force for getting pupils' ideas acted upon. Pupils show high levels of respect for the opinions and values of others. The view of the parent who wrote that the school provides pupils with 'a perfect start to life in multicultural Bristol' was endorsed during the inspection by the representatives of several minority groups who were anxious to praise the school and the pupils for the example they set. Community cohesion is at the heart of the school's ethos and it works very successfully at establishing links with local, national and international communities. Pupils value what they are learning from these links.

The headteacher's excellent leadership has developed a collective responsibility for school improvement amongst all staff. A new management structure has replaced individual subject leadership with school improvement teams that focus on different areas of the curriculum. These teams are working very effectively at monitoring the impact of the new curriculum. The school also benefits from the significant contribution of the governing body, which ensures that the school sets itself challenging targets. The school has an excellent capacity for further improvement because it has shown how successfully it has addressed areas for development, such as attendance and boys' writing, since its last inspection. The school knows itself well, its self-evaluation judgements are accurate and it knows precisely how it can improve still further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide staff with further opportunities to observe examples of best practice within the school.

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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?	1
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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which 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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

30 April 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Ashley Down Junior School, Bristol, BS7 9PD

Thank you for making me welcome in your school and for talking to me so willingly. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing you at work. You told me how much you enjoy going to school. This is not surprising because you have an outstanding school that is very successful in helping you to learn. The school does many excellent things. These are what it does particularly well.

- You are making terrific progress in your work and reach high standards by the end of Year 6.
- You behave well and are always willing to help one another at work and play and this makes your school a friendly, pleasant place where everyone feels safe and happy.
- You have an excellent understanding of the importance of eating healthily and taking regular physical exercise.
- In addition to your hard-working school council, many more of you have responsibilities around the school that you carry out splendidly and this helps the school to run smoothly.
- Teaching is excellent and your teachers work hard to plan interesting things for you to do in your lessons. This is helping you to learn well.
- All the adults look after you carefully and make sure that you are safe and get help whenever you need it.
- The headteacher leads the school superbly, and all the adults, including the governors, work very well together to improve it.

I have made one recommendation to make your school even better.

- Give teachers and teaching assistants more opportunities to observe in each other's classrooms to see how you learn when you do your work.

I hope you will carry on enjoying learning and helping your teachers to make Ashley Down Junior an even better school. You can do this by continuing to work hard and doing your very best.

Yours faithfully

Colin Lee

Lead inspector