

Ashcroft Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124147
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	380816
Inspection dates	8–9 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Hambly
Headteacher	Lee Kilkenny
Date of previous school inspection	12 December 2006
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They observed seven teachers. Inspectors observed eight lessons and a school assembly, and held discussions with staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. They looked at pupils' books and viewed a wide range of documentation including school policies, curriculum planning, self-evaluation information, improvement planning, safeguarding and welfare arrangements, and records of pupils' progress. Questionnaires returned by 69 parents and carers, and 17 members of staff, were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How well do teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that challenge all groups of pupils?
- How effective are middle leaders in evaluating performance and supporting the school drive for improvement?
- What is pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and how well does the school contribute to community cohesion?

Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized infant school. Virtually all pupils are of White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is close to average. The school has achieved Dyslexia Friendly and national Healthy School status, and Activemark recognition. The headteacher took up his post in September 2011.

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

Ashcroft Infants School provides a good standard of education. Pupils enjoy coming to school where they benefit from an attractive, welcoming and supportive learning environment. It is a school in which pupils feel safe and valued because staff know pupils really well and provide excellent levels of care. This underpins pupils' good personal development, particularly their spiritual, moral and social development. The vast majority of pupils do much to make this school an inclusive and harmonious community; they behave exceptionally well and show respect to their peers, adults and visitors. This is recognised by parents and carers. Virtually all of those who replied to the inspection questionnaire expressed a high level of satisfaction with the school and their children's experiences. One, capturing the views of many, said, 'The school has an excellent family ethos which, as a parent, fills me with confidence.' Healthy lifestyles are promoted well and pupils demonstrate an increasing understanding of the importance of diet and physical exercise to health. Although opportunities for pupils to contribute to the school and the wider community are, at present, limited, staff are in the process of developing this aspect of school life. Pupils are enthusiastic and take on extra responsibilities so that they can contribute even more to the success of the school.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage adapt quickly to the daily routines and enjoy the good range of activities on offer. Their confidence grows and a firm base is established for the rapid progress they make as they move through the school. By the end of Year 2, achievement is good and attainment in reading, writing and numeracy is high. The good achievement of all groups of pupils is due to predominantly good and some outstanding teaching. This is underpinned by the effective use of assessment information to plan learning tasks that match pupils' needs and to check their progress. However, this quality is not found consistently throughout the school. In a few lessons, not all pupils are provided with activities that consistently challenge them, particularly those capable of reaching higher levels. In some satisfactory lessons, the best use is not made of pupils' capacity for independent learning because introductory and other teacher-led activities take too long and lack pace.

The school has effective procedures for identifying pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. This enables pupils to receive the extra support they need to accelerate their learning as early as possible. One notable aspect of the school's care for individual pupils is the support provided for any who may be in vulnerable circumstances to ensure that they keep up with their classmates. The

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school's links with the local community are underpinned by a clear understanding of the context in which the school operates. As a result, community cohesion is promoted well on a local level. However, the curriculum is less effective in promoting pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures within a national context.

The recently appointed headteacher has quickly secured the confidence of parents and carers. As one said, 'the headteacher has made an excellent impression and, fills us with confidence'. With good support from staff and governors he is building on the success of the school and is ensuring that there is a strong emphasis on positive achievement for all. Challenging targets are set and the school's effective use of assessment information to check pupils' progress enables targeted support to be provided where needed. Self-evaluation procedures and the school's view of itself are accurate; its record of maintaining high attainment shows it is well placed to build on present strengths and has a good capacity to improve even further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning even further to make much of it outstanding by ensuring that
 - lesson introductions and teachers' explanations are not too long so that full advantage is taken of pupils' capacity for independent learning
 - in all lessons, learning tasks are appropriately challenging for pupils of all ability levels.
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by providing more opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of cultural diversity in national and international contexts.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Most children enter the school with skills and understanding that are in line with those expected for their age, with some that are above. Inspection findings confirm the school's evaluation that, there are many strengths and outcomes are good. There are aspects of learning which are not yet securely embedded in some lessons and pupils do not make maximum progress. Nevertheless, lesson observations, the work seen in pupils' books and school assessment information show that most of the current Year 2 pupils are making good progress and are on track to achieve the challenging targets set for them. Pupils enjoy their lessons, respond well to interesting and challenging activities, and demonstrate their ability to work effectively both independently and collaboratively. This was exemplified in a Year 2 literacy lesson where pupils worked enthusiastically in pairs as they developed their word recognition and writing skills. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because their needs are carefully assessed and they are sensitively supported and challenged well in class; they receive specialist individual or small group support from teachers or skilled teaching assistants.

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Pupils are proud of their school and are enthusiastic about many aspects of its life. They demonstrate a very good awareness of how to avoid risks and say that they fully trust adults in the school. Pupils know that someone will always help them if the need arises. Attendance is above average and would be higher were it not for family holidays taken in term time. When pupils leave the school, high basic skills, together with confidence in working together and using their initiative, ensure that they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and later life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

All lessons are characterised by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. In the very best lessons, pupils make good progress because assessment information is used well to guide the teachers' planning of learning tasks. Pupils are expected to work independently, stretching themselves and others as they talk things through. Perceptive questioning is used to extend pupils' thinking and encourage the use of more varied vocabulary in their answers. This was seen in a Year 1 literacy lesson; where pupils made good progress in understanding the ways in which writers use language to convey information and ideas. However, in a few lessons, pupils are given work that is too easy and this slows the progress they make. Progress is also slowed in lessons where teachers take too much time introducing the lesson and give pupils too little time to apply their learning and skills independently. Pupils are provided with clear guidance on how to improve through teachers' marking of their work. Increasingly effective use is being made of

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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assessment information to track pupils’ progress towards their targets, identify underperformance and provide additional support where necessary.

The topic-based curriculum provides pupils with a good range of learning experiences. This is evidenced in the excellent displays of pupils’ work that is seen in all areas of the school. The curriculum is presently being reviewed to extend learning through a wider range of planned opportunities for pupils to create, explore and to investigate, and to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in different contexts. The curriculum is enhanced well through local partnerships: for example, links with other schools broaden pupils' experiences. Parents and carers rightly say that the school is exceptionally caring. Pupils are very well looked after in this nurturing family community. Every pupil is known and treated as an individual and close attention is given to supporting children whose circumstances make them vulnerable, to promote their well-being. Staff monitor pupils’ welfare and progress carefully, and intervene sensitively and effectively with very well-judged support when needed.

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 school is led and managed well, as reflected in the very positive questionnaire responses from parents and carers. The clear direction provided for the school is driven by the senior leadership team’s determination to raise standards even further. Increased leadership responsibility is being given to subject coordinators and while many are relatively inexperienced in terms of leadership roles, all are keen to make a full contribution to the drive for improvement. Good links with external agencies support the individual needs of pupils. This is an essential element of the school’s effectiveness in combating discrimination. It also ensures the promotion of equality of opportunity so there are no significant gaps in attainment between any groups of pupils. All are fully included in everything the school has to offer, and make equally good progress.

Members of the governing body have worked well with other leaders and managers to ensure that safeguarding procedures are of good quality and all staff are well trained in these matters. As a result, the school has the full confidence of parents and carers. The governing body takes its statutory responsibilities seriously and provides the school with considerable support. Its members are well informed about the school through regular reports from the headteacher, and they have a keen

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interest in the school's performance.

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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
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	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children get off to a good start to their school life. They settle happily into school because of excellent links with parents and carers and the attention paid to get to know every family. As one parent wrote, 'teachers are excellent, they are always approachable and caring' and 'her learning has really taken off'. The strong emphasis on children's personal and social skills ensures that they soon begin to share, to learn and to play together. They achieve consistently well throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage. The stimulating curriculum, combined with good teaching and assessment, contributes well to children's progress. Activities are matched well to the needs of all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There is good teaching of early reading and writing and children's skills are enhanced through the systematic teaching of sounds and letters. The safe learning environment and enjoyable experiences help to develop children's positive attitudes to learning. There is a good balance between staff directing and guiding children and the provision of opportunities for children to explore and work independently. This contributes well to their preparation for Year 1. Currently, staff are rightly focusing on extending outdoor learning to accelerate children's progress in their development of basic literacy and numeracy skills. Good leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage has contributed to a cohesive team of staff who work together well. They use their secure knowledge of how young children learn to ensure good progress in all areas of learning.

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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

Virtually all of parents and carers who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed positive views about every aspect of the school. In particular, they consider that the school has a dedicated team of staff and that senior leaders manage the school well. They agree that they are fully informed about their children’s progress and that they are happy with their children’s experiences at school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ashcroft Infants' 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 140 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	59	86	9	13	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	62	90	7	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	64	25	36	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	53	77	15	22	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	78	14	20	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	70	20	29	0	0	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	55	80	14	20	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)	45	65	19	28	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	50	72	18	26	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	64	23	33	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	39	57	26	38	2	3	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	51	74	18	26	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	56	81	13	19	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



12 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashcroft Infants' School, Tamworth, B79 8RU

Thank you for the help you gave us with the recent inspection of your school, and for the friendly way you received us. We spoke to many of you, and you were really helpful.

You receive a good education and reach high standards at the end of Year 2. You enjoy school, listen carefully to what your teachers have to say and are willing to work hard in your lessons. Your excellent behaviour is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on making your work interesting and helping you to learn. This is one of the reasons you are making such good progress. In most of your lessons, you make very good progress and we have asked your teachers to make sure that you are really stretched in all of your lessons, so that you make the best progress you possibly can. Your teachers spend a lot of time marking your work and you can help yourselves to make even more progress by trying hard to follow the good advice you are given.

You understand the importance of being healthy; you eat sensibly and take part in physical activities regularly. You learn to work and play well together and to help each other. We were impressed with how keen you are to make the school even better by taking on more responsibility through, for example, the new class council. Adults at school look after you exceptionally well, so that you are safe and happy. Your headteacher, all the other staff and the governing body are determined to make things even better. As part of this, we have asked the school to provide you with more opportunities to learn about the customs and beliefs of a wider range of people. You can play your part by continuing to enjoy school, attending regularly and always trying to do the best you possibly can in all of your lessons.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Thomas
Lead inspector

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