



# Ashcroft Infant and Nursery School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 124147  
**Local Authority** Staffordshire  
**Inspection number** 292902  
**Inspection dates** 12–13 December 2006  
**Reporting inspector** Lois Furness

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Mildenhall
<b>School category</b>	Community		off Wigginton Road
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–7		Tamworth B79 8RU
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01827 475925
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	152	<b>Fax number</b>	01827 52069
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Roger Hewitt
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Marilyn Demain
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	16 May 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Ashcroft is a small school where almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is below average as is the proportion of pupils entitled to a school meal free of charge. Since the time of the previous inspection, a Nursery has been established and on entry to this class, children's attainment mainly matches that expected for their age. The school achieved 'dyslexia friendly' status in 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ashcroft is a good school that has outstanding features. Extremely rich learning experiences provided within an exciting environment help pupils to develop both academically and socially. The school's very many strengths are the result of good leadership and management. Everyone agrees that the key to the school's success is the excellent leadership of the headteacher. All adults, including governors, work together effectively, keeping the best interests of the pupils in clear sight.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and say, 'If they had to come back to school, then Ashcroft is where they would want to be.' Pupils agree and thoroughly enjoy learning and taking part in the extensive range of stimulating activities offered. Behaviour around school and in lessons is exemplary. Pupils achieve well in relation to their starting points and capabilities because teaching is good. Good progress starts in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception), where provision is good. Standards by the end of Year 2 are above average overall. There are particular strengths in reading, writing and science. In mathematics, standards are broadly average and progress is satisfactory. As a result of pinpointing exactly the weaker aspects of mathematical understanding, standards are improving rapidly throughout the school. In 2006, more pupils than in the past attained the expected level but although improving too few pupils attained the higher level. Now, teachers are planning activities carefully to ensure that the more able pupils consistently receive work that challenges their thinking.

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start and quickly settle into the school community. All pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school and are well equipped for later life. The school gives outstanding care, guidance and support and has robust systems to protect all pupils, including the most vulnerable. Relationships are excellent and pupils know that there is an adult they can turn to if they have a problem, confident that it will be sorted out immediately. They understand about keeping healthy and safe because the school plans lessons and discussion times when these issues can be talked about. All of this results in pupils who are very keen to learn.

Teachers plan interesting and lively lessons, which means that pupils work with enthusiasm, a sense of purpose and an aim to please. They ensure that there is enough hands-on activity to motivate pupils to learn new skills and knowledge in a way that broadens pupils' understanding. Teaching assistants ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are included well in all activities. Pupils know that their targets help them to make progress. However, when working independently, few realise how they themselves can use their targets to help them to learn even faster. Helping pupils to do this is a priority identified by the school in its drive to raise achievement further.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher level in mathematics by ensuring more able pupils are consistently challenged.

- Show pupils how they themselves can use their targets to improve their rate of learning.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Most pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well because they have very positive attitudes to learning and they are well taught. Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage because of good quality provision, and on entry to Year 1 virtually all reach or exceed the standards expected. They make particularly good progress in their personal, social and emotional development.

In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to achieve well and attain standards that are above average overall. However, standards in mathematics are not as high as those in reading, writing and science and although improving, too few pupils attain the higher level in this subject. Thorough analysis of assessment information showed that pupils' skills of solving problems and subtraction were weaknesses. Good actions for example, teaching Year 2 pupils in ability groups, were implemented, and in 2006 pupils' performance improved significantly. Assessment of pupils currently in Years 1 and 2 indicates that standards in mathematics are continuing to rise as teachers work hard to ensure that all pupils including the more able consistently receive work that makes them think hard.

Although in the past, boys have not achieved as well as girls, improved resources and a strong emphasis on promoting boys' learning have meant that there are no longer significant differences between boys' and girls' attainment.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils have very positive attitudes and are often bubbling with enthusiasm as they work. 'School is fun, wonderful, fantastic, helpful and helps you learn,' is a typical response. They feel safe and secure in their exciting learning environment and as a result they develop a striking degree of self-confidence. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Attendance is satisfactory. Although most pupils attend school very regularly, a small minority of parents take their children on holiday during term-time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There are significant strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral and social development, but their awareness of other cultures at home and abroad is less well developed. Pupils display a very strong understanding of healthy eating and taking regular exercise. The importance of the community is well understood and pupils willingly take on responsibility. School council members are very effective in raising pupils' awareness of safety issues. All pupils support each other very well in paired and group work and in the wide range of school productions. During lessons pupils are often heard saying spontaneously to one another, 'What do you think?' This

willingness to seek others' opinions and their good achievement prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good learning habits and routines are established at an early age in the Foundation Stage. In Years 1 and 2, the teachers' consistent approach and high expectations of good work and behaviour result in pupils achieving well. The introductions to lessons are lively and many different interesting practical activities ensure that pupils maintain a keen enjoyment of learning. Teaching assistants are deployed carefully to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are included well in lessons.

Teachers use assessment effectively to plan tasks that are generally well matched to pupils' needs although more able pupils are not always as well challenged as they might be, particularly in mathematics. The pace of learning is good when pupils are working with adults. However, this learning slows when working independently because pupils do not make enough use of the guidance available to them.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The curriculum and other activities are outstanding. Planning is innovative and very effective in developing a very wide range of stimulating and exciting learning opportunities. Pupils' needs are met well and the very good emphasis on considering pupils' interests results in outstanding personal progress. However, the provision to raise awareness of other faiths and cultures is not as extensive. Creativity is very effectively encouraged to nurture the development of pupils' individual skills. Role play and drama are used to generate interest and to enhance opportunities for pupils' writing. This has led to improved attainment in this subject, notably for boys. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties are met very well. There is an excellent range of enrichment opportunities to broaden pupils' learning, including using the specialist skills of parents and other adults, regular concerts and productions, visits and visitors.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 1**

Procedures for safeguarding all pupils, including the most vulnerable, are very securely in place. This very high quality of support is a key factor in pupils' outstanding personal development. Self-esteem is promoted very well so that pupils become confident learners, enabling all to achieve well. Relationships are extremely strong and the warmth of these relationships ensures that all pupils thrive and flourish. There is a very strong commitment to support pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and this commitment, alongside the excellent links with outside agencies, supports their good achievement. Academic guidance is very clearly communicated and pupils

know their targets and what they have to do to improve. As yet, pupils do not use the information provided as well as they could to help them learn at an even greater rate.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher is an excellent role model, inspires commitment and enthusiasm from all members of staff and has successfully developed a very effective team approach. This is a very positive factor in the consistently good academic progress pupils make and their outstanding personal development. Governors are strongly supportive of the school and have a good understanding of strengths and development areas. As a result of regular checking, the school has pinpointed the right priorities for further improvement. Subject leadership is good and the school is strengthening leadership by enabling all leaders to find out more about provision in their subjects. The mathematics leader's knowledge of what needs to be done to develop the subject is already shown in improved standards in 2006. However, the school is not complacent and the leader is continuing to support teachers in ensuring that all groups of pupils, including the more able, achieve as well as they do in other subjects.

Parents have a high regard for the school, one of them reflecting the views of many in saying, 'We are very lucky that our son has had the benefit of the best possible start to his education at such a lovely school.' Improvement since the previous inspection is good and the school is well placed to continue to go from strength to strength.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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	2

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	1
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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**

Thank you for your very friendly welcome during our recent visit to your school. Your school is a very welcoming place and Mr Cardinal and I enjoyed talking with you and listening to your views. We think that you are right that Ashcroft is a good school with lots of strengths.

The things that are particularly good:

- You have an excellent headteacher who knows what needs to be done to help you to learn better.
- Many of you are good at reading, writing and science by the time you leave school.
- You start to enjoy school right from the Foundation Stage.
- Teaching is good and staff work hard to make lessons exciting and learning fun.
- The staff take outstanding care of you, and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent.
- It is very good to see how you think it is important to help each other all you can.
- You clearly understand how important it is to eat healthily and take regular exercise.
- We understand why your parents think that you have a good start to school life at Ashcroft school.

To make it even better the school now needs to:

- Make sure that those of you who are good at mathematics are set work that makes you think hard and do your best.
- Show you how you can use your targets to improve your work by yourselves.

We hope you continue to work hard and enjoy your time in your good school.