

Ashwater Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113126
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	378647
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2012
Lead inspector	Denise Morris

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 of pupils on the school roll	60
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Martin
Headteacher	Glenister Thom
Date of previous school inspection	22 October 2008
School address	Ashwater Beaworthy EX21 5EW
Telephone number	01409 211228
Fax number	01409 211228
Email address	admin@ashwater.devon.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Denise Morris

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Seven lessons were observed, most of them jointly with senior staff, and four different teachers were seen over a period of four hours. Meetings were held with the headteacher, teachers, pupils and three members of the governing body. The inspector took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. The inspector observed the school's work, looked at pupils' records and talked to some pupils about their school. The inspector scrutinised the school's development plan, safeguarding documents, the minutes of governing body meetings and planning documents. Questionnaires were returned by 53 parents and carers and responses were analysed. Some staff and pupils in Years 3 to 6 also completed questionnaires and the inspector took account of the views expressed.

Information about the school

Ashwater is a much smaller than average sized primary school set in a rural area. Pupils are taught in two mixed-age-group classes with children in their Reception Year sharing a class with Years 1 and 2 pupils. All pupils are White British. The percentage of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs fluctuates from year to year but is presently lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than average. The school exceeds the current floor standards. The school has been awarded the national Eco School Bronze Award. There is on-site childcare for children from the age of three that is not managed by the governing body and, therefore, was not part of this inspection.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Ashwater Primary is a good school. High levels of staff training, strong collaboration with parents and carers and other local schools and a clear focus on the teaching of phonics, (linking letters with the sounds they make) underpin the school’s quality. The school is not outstanding because pupils’ progress in writing is not as strong as it is in reading and mathematics.
- All groups of pupils, including those who are disabled and those with special educational needs, achieve well. Pupils make particularly good progress in reading and mathematics from often low starting points. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage get off to a good start and make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice. Teaching typically extends pupils’ skills and ensures that they have equal access to the many new and exciting learning opportunities within the revised curriculum. The teaching of reading is particularly strong. In a very few writing lessons expectations are not high enough to meet the different abilities of all pupils. Assessment is used well to inform teachers how well pupils achieve and pupils’ work is helpfully marked.
- Pupils behave well and say they feel safe and secure at school. Attendance has risen recently and is above average. Good relationships and a strong emphasis on promoting pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- The headteacher and the governing body have created an exciting and welcoming learning environment in which pupils thrive and are valued. Leaders know the school’s strengths well and have managed teachers’ performance effectively to ensure that pupils reach at least the expected standards of achievement. They have improved teaching well through providing excellent training opportunities for staff, particularly for new teachers.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By December 2012 improve the quality of teaching in promoting pupils' writing skills so that they achieve as well as they do in reading by:
 - extending opportunities for writing tasks that interest and motivate pupils
 - raising expectations of how much writing pupils complete in their lessons
 - ensuring that writing tasks are linked closely to individual pupils' different abilities.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Parents and carers consider that their children make good progress during their time at the school. Inspection evidence supports this view. Pupils' attainment is variable because of the small number of pupils in each year group, and making national comparisons is problematic. Pupils' achievement, including that of pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs, from their starting points is good and, as a result, the school exceeds the national floor standard. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve well and make good progress in their learning. They benefit from a new and exciting outdoor learning area and quickly settle, make friends and learn to share resources with their peers. 'I feel that Ashwater is giving my child an excellent start in education' is a typical comment from a parent. Pupils achieve particularly well in their reading skills, achieving broadly average standards by the end of Year 2 because of an effective phonics programme. This helps them learn quickly about letters and sounds from the time they enter school. This was evident in Years 1 and 2 when the effective promotion of phonic skills to identify different spellings for the same sound challenged pupils well and enabled them to recognise at least four different ways of making the 'ai' sound in words. Three boys made good progress working in a group independently to find the correct sounds to enable them to write down some difficult words. By Years 5 and 6 pupils read a wide range of books, both fiction and non-fiction. They regularly use the school library as well as community library facilities. One Year 6 pupil commented that he had already put in his order for the next book in the series he was reading. By the time they leave the school, pupils' attainment in reading is above average.

Progress in mathematics is good. Older pupils proudly showed their mathematics books where work is neatly presented and of a good quality. Pupils' progress in writing is not as strong. Some improvement across Years 3 to 6 is being made through the introduction of 'Big Write' sessions. These focus well on creative approaches to writing, but in a few writing sessions the pace of learning dips because the work is either too difficult for some or does not sufficiently challenge those of a higher ability. This reduces the amount of progress pupils make and the amount of work they complete. The effective promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development ensures they make some good progress in their personal development.

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Quality of teaching

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires rightly agree that their children are well taught. The vast majority of lessons have good pace and very effective use of resources to engage and interest pupils. Teachers usually make good use of the creative curriculum to design their lessons, matching tasks to pupils' needs and extending their abilities. For example, following the story of 'Bungalow Bill,' pupils in Years 3 to 6 took part enthusiastically in a creative approach to writing. They dressed up as burglars and searched for 'exciting words' to use in their writing. Similarly, pupils in Years 1 and 2 benefit from high quality creative teaching. This was evident in a creative art lesson where they used design plans accurately to make Easter cards. The wide range of resources available enthused them and they worked carefully using tools safely as the teacher encouraged them to try new approaches. Some very skilled teaching in physical education, art, design and technology and music contributes well to pupils' enjoyment and successes. Adults' questioning of pupils is a particular strength and this is helping to develop pupils' skills and deepen understanding.

Teachers are skilful in promoting the teaching of phonics. This was clearly evident in the Reception class where the teacher helped children to focus carefully and successfully on initial sounds as they tried to create posters to catch the 'Big Bad Wolf'. Assessment is thorough and consistent. Teachers moderate annotated examples of pupils' work together which gives them a very clear view of each pupil's progress. Targets are clearly set for improvement and are well known to pupils.

Teaching throughout the well-planned curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, the use of topics such as researching the Olympics or studying the Vikings helps promote pupils' awareness of helping others, and how to know right from wrong. Just occasionally pupils' learning dips, when teachers do not match work closely enough to pupils' individual abilities. This is particularly evident in the teaching of writing when the same writing tasks are set for the whole class. At these times teachers do not always keep pupils interested for very long and too little writing results.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Almost all pupils, including those pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs, respond well to the school's strategies to promote their good behaviour and safety. This results in behaviour over time being good. Pupils join in well with their peers, taking turns, helping others and taking on simple responsibilities. The good range of resources and activities at playtimes and lunchtimes and a good staff presence have a positive impact on the calm atmosphere and positive relationships, promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Most parents and carers say that behaviour is good. Pupils are engaged in writing their own classroom rules and have a strong impact on the school charter. They regularly raise money for different charities. Pupils show obvious

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enjoyment of school and almost all attend regularly so that attendance is above the national average.

Pupils are safe and secure. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires believe that their child is kept safe. There is no evidence of bullying, including bullying related to disability, special educational needs, race, religion or gender. Pupils say that everyone is kind and that absolutely no bullying occurs. Pupils say they are confident in the staff and know there is always someone to help them. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn about safety in their work and play. For example, they learn how to use scissors safely, and about the importance of obeying rules and holding doors open for others. Younger pupils learn to use a knife and fork appropriately and how to be careful as they ride their bikes around the playground.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and staff have successfully created an exciting environment for pupils. Leaders have developed the skills of staff very well through good training opportunities and created an imaginative curriculum which enables pupils to learn about the wider world through many visits and visitors. Partnership working with other local schools has improved, enabling teachers to moderate pupils' work collaboratively and providing opportunities for joint activities for more able pupils, particularly in science. Leaders, including the governing body, have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and a good track record over the past two years of successful improvements. This demonstrates the good capacity there is for sustaining improvements. A high priority is given to ensuring that pupils are safe. The school's safeguarding procedures are rigorously applied, fully meeting statutory requirements and giving no cause for concern.

Regular monitoring and support for teachers is helping the quality of teaching to improve in most areas, although it is not fully effective in the teaching of writing. Performance management has a high focus in the school and is proving effective, for example, in how it has developed the successful strategy for the teaching of phonics. Leaders promote equality well and tackle any discrimination rigorously through curriculum activities that are well designed to cater for the needs of all groups. Effective support ensures that pupils who are disabled and those with special educational needs make similar good progress to their peers.

The curriculum is good because it provides a wide range of creative activities that fully engage all groups of pupils. Regular sport, including swimming for all pupils including those in the Reception class, frequent arts activities as well as music tuition ensure that pupils can follow their own interests. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through the many visits out of school offered to pupils. Leaders work effectively with parents and carers as shown by pupils' rising attendance. The vast majority of parents and carers are pleased with the school: 'We have a wonderful school' commented one parent, which echoed the views of others.

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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



15 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashwater Primary School, Beaworthy EX21 5EW

Thank you for welcoming me when I inspected your school recently. It was lovely to meet and talk with you. You told me many things about your school, such as what you like doing and all about your work and how well you are doing. You also told me that you enjoy school and feel safe.

I can see from the answers to the questionnaires that I received from your parents and carers that you are happy at school. I have judged your school to be good. There are lots of good things in your school, such as your achievement and the teaching. Your headteacher and the other leaders are also doing a good job. I thought your behaviour was good and I know that you all try to come to school every day. Well done for that!

You listen carefully to your teachers. I was impressed by the way that some of you read to me. You know a lot about books and I know you really enjoy your reading. Because of this your reading skills are improving quickly. Just occasionally you do not do enough writing in your lessons and your writing skills are not quite as strong as your reading and mathematics skills. I am asking your teachers to help you improve your writing by making sure that your tasks are linked closely to your abilities and by making sure you do enough writing in lessons. You can help with this by trying hard to write more and thinking carefully about your content.

Thank you again for your welcome.

Yours sincerely
Denise Morris
Lead inspector

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