

Ashfield Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117391
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379410
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2012
Lead inspector	Sue Hughes

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary Controlled
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nigel De Costa
Headteacher	Carolyn Dalziel
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2006
School address	School Lane Bushey WD23 1SR
Telephone number	0208 9502350
Fax number	0208 3860525
Email address	admin@ashfield.herts.sch.uk

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Sue Hughes

Additional inspector

Gill Ellyard

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspection team sampled 20 lessons taught by eight teachers, of which two were observed jointly with the headteacher. Meetings were held with parents and carers, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at monitoring information, improvement plans, analysis and tracking of pupils' progress, and records of classroom observations. They also sampled pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked attendance. Inspectors analysed questionnaires submitted by 23 staff, 98 pupils and 138 parents and carers.

Information about the school

Ashfield Junior School is an average-sized school. It has a smaller proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals than other schools nationally. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language is below the national average. The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly in line with that in other schools but there are fewer pupils on School Action plus or with statements of special educational needs than in similar schools nationally. The school exceeds the current government floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress.

The school has gained the Eco Schools' Silver Award and has Healthy Schools' accreditation.

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because progress and attainment in mathematics is not as good as in English, but the gap between attainment in English and mathematics is narrowing. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils underpins all the school does. It has a strong spiritual ethos because pupils are inspired by their learning.
- Attainment in English is well above average and progress in this subject is good. Attainment in mathematics dipped to a broadly average level at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2011. However, progress in mathematics is improving and standards are rising throughout the school. The progress of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good and no groups of pupils do less well than their peers over time. However, in a small minority of lessons, work for more-able pupils is not challenging enough to promote consistently good progress.
- Teaching is good and teachers' enthusiasm inspires pupils to work hard. Most lessons are stimulating and as a result, almost all pupils make good progress and enjoy their learning. Occasionally, teachers' planning in mathematics, does not focus sufficiently on the needs of more-able pupils and at such times their rate of progress drops.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is outstanding. They respond to high expectations in school and are extremely courteous to each other and to adults. The buddying system helps support younger pupils, while giving older pupils a strong sense of responsibility and pride.
- The strong leadership and governance of the school ensure that areas for development are identified and addressed successfully. The leading of teaching and management of performance by the headteacher and senior leaders is resulting in improved progress and higher standards in all subjects.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in mathematics by:
 - ensuring that planning for all lessons meets the needs of pupils of all abilities, but especially the more-able
 - ensuring that marking is consistent in enabling pupils to understand and act upon the next steps in their learning
 - strengthening the use of questioning to extend and deepen pupils'

learning.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers rightly feel that their children make good progress. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English is well above average because they make good progress from above average standards when starting at the school. Pupils are very articulate and able to enter into high level discussion such as the impact of using flash backs in literature in Year 6 and whether laboratory testing on animals is ethical in Year 4. Standards in reading are high. The teaching of sounds that letters make (phonics) in Year 3 feeds into the development of effective spelling strategies throughout the school. Pupils achieve high standards in writing because skills are reinforced systematically across all areas of the curriculum.

Progress in mathematics is less rapid and standards at the end of Key Stage 2 last year were broadly average. Where teaching is most successful, tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities, ensuring that they are all challenged sufficiently and so make good progress. However in a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations are not high enough for more-able pupils. Their learning is not progressed rapidly enough through astute teacher questioning which develops deeper understanding.

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. This is because work is matched to their needs, actively engaging them in their learning. Support staff are well briefed and support specific groups of pupils effectively. Progress of all groups of pupils in English is consistently good. In mathematics, however, there are occasional lessons where progress is not quite so strong. The gap between the progress and attainment of boys and girls evident at the end Key Stage 2 last year has been closed.

Quality of teaching

Pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn. This is because teachers are enthusiastic and make the lessons interesting and exciting. Almost all parents and carers agree that their children are taught well. Expectations are high in most lessons; pupils understand the targets they are aiming for and how they can achieve them. Teachers' planning is thorough but occasionally planning for more-able pupils in mathematics does not take enough account of their higher starting points to extend and deepen their learning effectively.

Books are marked thoroughly, and in English books teachers give clear guidance to pupils as to how to improve, with time allocated for them to respond. Marking in mathematics books is encouraging and highlights errors, but does not always give clear guidance for next steps in learning.

Targeted groups of pupils are well supported. No learning time is wasted on organisation, which means that pupils are productively engaged all the time. Planning and support for lower attaining pupils and those who are disabled or have

special educational needs is good, and pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are well supported. Many parents expressed their appreciation for the concern of the headteacher and staff and one said, 'I cannot thank them enough for their care and attention'.

Teachers' awareness of the importance of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is evident throughout the curriculum. Pupils are given the opportunity to develop spiritual and emotional responses in their learning. The short film 'The Piano' drew emotional gasps from one Year 6 class, while pupils in the other Year 6 class were awe-struck by their exciting science experiments during which solids changed into gasses. The excellent behaviour in the school demonstrates that pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and this is developed through opportunities to discuss moral issues. Pupils in Year 5 gave very mature responses to moral dilemmas including how they could respond to dropped litter, and what the consequences of any particular response might be.

Pupils say that the regular homework is well balanced and helps them with their learning in school. They particularly enjoy practical tasks such as making puppets in Year 3.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

A large majority of parents and carers feel that the school keeps their children safe and that behaviour is good. Nearly all pupils agree that behaviour is good, both in the school as a whole and also in their lessons. These views are consistent with inspection findings. Pupils' behaviour is excellent. In lessons, they demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes to learning as they stay on task and work hard. They readily share resources and ideas, and levels of collaboration and cooperation are exceptional. Pupils see it as their responsibility to help anyone who finds behaving well a challenge. By helping them make the right choices they contribute strongly to the calm, harmonious atmosphere that pervades the school.

Older pupils look after younger ones through the buddying system and all pupils agree that this works well. Family group assemblies and the activities led by their Year 6 'Top Buddies' help them get to know pupils from different year groups. Older pupils are proud to be seen as role models and younger pupils say that they feel they can talk to their older buddies at any time.

Incidents of bullying, including prejudiced based bullying, are rare and most pupils say that any incidents are dealt with well. A very large majority of parents and carers agree with this.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and so understand safe and unsafe situations. They are very clear about different types of bullying and know how to respond responsibly to incidents of racist or cyber bullying. Personal, social, cultural and health education lessons give opportunities for debate and discussion around behaviour, expectations and respect for others and pupils speak about these lessons with enthusiasm.

Most pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and attendance for all groups of

pupils is high. Pupils are punctual and all lessons start on time.

Leadership and management

Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, the senior leadership team has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. School data is used efficiently to track pupils' progress and the leadership team has identified the need to raise standards in mathematics. Initiatives such as linking mathematical learning to real life situations are beginning to take effect. As a result, progress is accelerating in every year group. Governance is effective. The governing body knows the strengths of the school and where improvement is needed. Members of the governing body challenge and hold the school to account through their coherent strategy for monitoring progress and ensuring that improvement targets are met.

The school is actively building sustainability by developing the skills of middle leaders. A comprehensive programme of professional development, including mentoring and support, is rapidly enhancing the leadership skills of subject leaders and ensuring that progress and attainment is tracked in all subjects. The school's record of improvement since its last inspection, and strengthened governing body monitoring and middle leadership give the school a good capacity for sustained improvement.

The planned curriculum is good because it is exciting and stimulating. Literacy and communication skills are used effectively across all subjects. Mathematics skills are developed in other subjects but to a lesser extent. Strong partnerships with local secondary schools support staff development and enhance the curriculum for pupils. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the mathematics and technology master-classes and benefits that stem from the effective arts and sports partnerships. Good links with these and the neighbouring infant school ensure smooth transition for pupils between schools. Clubs are well attended and enrichment activities such as the 'School Journey' for pupils in Year 6 are a source of enthusiasm and excitement.

The way pupils conduct themselves around school is testament to the strong influence of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Opportunities to reflect on moral issues in lessons and assemblies are seized with enthusiasm. Pupils have a good understanding of other cultures.

The leadership of the school has ensured that the arrangements for safeguarding comply fully with current requirements. Records and checks are robust and appropriate policies and practices provide a safe environment for the pupils and staff. The school promotes equality and tackles discrimination, providing good support for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Although some parents and carers feel that communications between school and home could be improved, most feel that the school keeps them well informed and are very supportive. The inspection found that newsletters and an interactive website provide parents and carers with up to date information and guidance as to how to support their children's learning. The parent forum presents a further opportunity for communication between home and school.

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.



19 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ashfield Junior School, Bushey, WD23 1SR

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school recently. You were polite, helpful and told us a lot about the interesting and exciting things you do in school. Ashfield Junior is a good school and we agree with you that the teaching is good. You play an important part in making it such a good school as your behaviour is excellent, both in lessons and around school. You are kind and considerate to each other and it is good to see the way the older pupils look out for the younger ones as their buddies. Well done!

Although you achieve very well in English, your achievement in mathematics is not so good. There are a few things we have asked your teachers to do to make your school even better and improve your mathematical skills and knowledge. We have asked them to:

- make sure that they plan mathematical activities which help all of you to do as well as you can
- make sure that comments in your books give you a clear understanding of what to do next in order to move to the next higher level
- ask you questions which will extend and reinforce your learning

You can play your part by making sure you follow your teachers' guidance on how to improve and continue to try hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Sue Hughes
Lead inspector

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