

Askwith Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121379
Local Authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	313968
Inspection date	19 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

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	5-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jan Osinski
Headteacher	Mr Don Parker
Date of previous school inspection	15 November 2004
School address	Askwith Otley West Yorkshire LS21 2JB
Telephone number	01943 462896
Fax number	01943 462896

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: pupils' progress, with a particular focus on the more able pupils, boys and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; the quality of teaching and learning; the factors that make the leadership and management so successful; and the provision for gifted and talented pupils. Evidence was gathered from: national published assessment data; the school's self-evaluation, assessment records, policies and minutes; observation of the school at work, including lessons; discussions with the chair of governors, members of staff, pupils and parents; the questionnaires returned by parents. 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 this report.

Description of the school

This small school, which opened in 1908, serves a rural community on the edge of Wharfedale, although over half the pupils live in local towns. The great majority of pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language. No pupil is eligible to receive a free school meal. The proportion that has learning difficulties and/or disabilities is smaller than average. A larger proportion of pupils than is usual leaves or, more often, joins the school part way through their primary education.

The school has achieved a range of awards including: in 2006, a Leading Aspect Award related to the development of pupils' thinking and speaking skills; in 2007, the Inclusion Quality Mark and Healthy School status; in 2008, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and local authority Highly Effective School status for the fifth time. It is working towards the Quality Mark for information and communication technology, and Fair Trade Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school provides its pupils with an outstanding education. Excellent leadership and management ensure that pupils develop unusually mature academic and personal skills that lead to them achieving high standards of work and making a very strong contribution to the community. They are exceptionally well prepared to make the most of their future lives. The impressive wall-hanging made to celebrate the school's centenary, that parents, staff and all pupils have been involved in making, admirably demonstrates the school's many strengths. Pupils have planned, discussed and evaluated the design and learned new skills. Their powers of observation and creativity have been used well to produce a vibrant collage. While working collaboratively to the benefit of the community, pupils have learned that it is worth taking time and trouble to produce high quality work.

The school's small numbers mean that standards can vary considerably from year to year but children's skills when they join the Reception class are usually typical for their age. By the end of Year 2, standards are usually above average and by the end of Year 6 they are consistently well above average. All pupils, whatever their abilities, talents or familiarity with the English language, make excellent progress. Standards in Key Stage 2 have been on a rising trend over five years. In 2007 they were exceptionally high with all pupils achieving the expected level and well over two thirds reaching the higher Level 5 in reading, writing, mathematics and science, demonstrating the outstanding progress made by the more able pupils. Current pupils' work is above average in Key Stage 1 and of a very high standard in Key Stage 2. One of the reasons for this sustained success is that the school is constantly seeking to improve its provision to the benefit of each pupil. Rigorous analysis of test results and pupils' progress has, for example, led to the introduction of individualised targets in science, in addition to those in English and mathematics, and of homework learning logs. A sharp focus on raising the standards of boys' writing has proved highly effective over the current year, particularly at Key Stage 1. This is exemplified by work such as, 'I looked around me and everything I could see was white as a polar bear's ear,' in Year 2 and, 'The trees peer over the lake as if they were watching something. Who knows what lurks beneath this frozen pool?' in Year 6.

Pupils' ability to assess their own work and that of others accurately is an important feature of everyday life at this school and is supported by teachers' helpful marking. Pupils are absolutely clear about how to improve their work, and are proficient at helping others to see how they could do so too. A deep discussion between two boys about why 'stumberly', although an interesting word, is not actually a suitable adjective to use in a formal piece of writing, exemplifies the effectiveness of such evaluation. It also highlights another of the school's exceptional strengths - the great emphasis placed on developing pupils' powers of logical thinking and speaking. Pupils of all ages confidently voice their opinions, listen carefully to what others say and express themselves with unusual clarity. This is because teachers are exceptionally skilled at helping them to share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints. Teachers plan and execute their lessons with great care, taking excellent account of pupils' individual needs. Teaching assistants are an integral part of the team and are deployed extremely effectively. This is why pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make the same outstanding progress as other pupils. Teachers ensure that the purpose of lessons is crystal clear. Activities are interesting and often based on first-hand experience. Lessons move at a brisk pace but there is always plenty of time for pupils to think. The quality of teaching and learning is indeed outstanding.

It is a tribute to the excellence of the leadership and management that pupils' learning is of such high quality. Senior staff provide first-rate role models both as teachers and as leaders, are enthused by the ideas that the new staff have brought to the school, and are tireless in helping them to develop their skills. Governors, too, play a strong part in the school's success. They provide support, challenge and, through shrewd financial management, the money and resources needed to fund extensive opportunities for all staff's professional development and the flexibility of approach that is of particular importance in a small school. Procedures are in place to promote child protection, health and safety. Open communication and teamwork at all levels ensure that the school runs smoothly and happily. It has excellent capacity to improve further.

Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and praise, among many things, the improvements in communication since the last inspection. Comments such as, 'My child in Year 6 has had a very enjoyable and successful educational experience at the school,' and 'Each child is made to feel special and valued,' confirm the high quality of care, guidance and support that enables pupils to achieve so well. The rich, innovative curriculum also makes a strong contribution to pupils' success, with very flexible grouping of pupils of different ages, and lessons such as philosophy and global education being a regular feature of the timetable. All this leads to pupils developing into thoughtful, articulate young people with high self-esteem. They have an excellent awareness of the interdependence of individuals and communities, and of the role they can play in creating change. They greatly enjoy school and know how to keep healthy and safe. Their high achievement is closely linked to their excellent relationships, behaviour, attendance and attitudes to learning.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Children make excellent progress in their Reception year so that the great majority achieve, and most exceed, the expected skills in all areas by the time they join Year 1. This is because of strong leadership, close partnership with parents and high quality teaching, which skilfully balances adult input with independent learning. Planning is firmly based on the teacher's excellent knowledge of individuals' needs, gained through close observation and analysis of their progress. All staff are expert at engaging children in purposeful conversation and building on their interests. Activities are superbly designed to let children learn through experimentation. During the inspection they collaborated to make peanut butter cookies, independently using a carefully worded and illustrated recipe and their knowledge of the links between letters and sounds to read the instructions. They understood the need to wash their hands before starting and learned about the importance of accurate counting and the use of equal measures to reach a successful conclusion. This was practical learning at its best. Staff use great ingenuity to ensure that children extend their learning outside. However, the lack of ready access to a covered, outdoor area reduces the possibilities for this and wastes time when moving backwards and forwards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the access to the outdoors for children in the Foundation Stage.

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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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	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 disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is 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
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
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 the 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

¹ 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.

Annex A

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Inspection of Askwith Community Primary School, Otley, LS21 2JB

What a super day I had when I inspected your school recently - thank you very much indeed for your warm welcome and for talking with me so openly. I could certainly see why some of you described Askwith Community Primary as 'fantastic' and 'the best thing in the entire world'. You, your parents and the staff are right: it is an outstanding school.

The main reason that your school is so terrific is that your headteacher, other leaders and all staff are always thinking of ways to make sure that it keeps on improving. They are truly exceptional and provide you with high quality care and support that help you all to flourish at school. I know that you appreciate the many interesting things that they plan for you to do, from visiting the Yorkshire Dales as inspiration for Class 4's topic work, to making peanut butter cookies in the Reception class. I was very impressed by the centenary banner that you are all making with your parents' help. I was also delighted to see how well you all get on with each other and help to create the school's happy atmosphere.

You make excellent progress with your work and reach very high standards. This is hardly surprising because all your teachers are very skilled at helping you to learn, and you all enjoy working hard. What is really unusual is the amount of time you spend discussing how you can improve your work; you become real experts at helping yourselves and other pupils to upgrade it. It is also excellent that you develop such mature thinking, speaking and listening skills, which are likely to prove very useful at secondary school and in later life.

Your school clearly goes from strength to strength with each passing year. At the moment, the main difficulty for the staff is making sure that the Reception children have enough opportunities to extend their learning freely outdoors. Staff have to take them quite a distance to get to the outside area. Your headteacher and I agree that the access from Class 1 to the outside area needs to be improved.

I do hope that you all continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.