

Ashill Community Primary School

School Road, Ilminster, TA19 9ND

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher, staff and governors of this very small school are an exceptionally strong team. They relentlessly pursue excellence in all areas of the school's work and are dedicated to providing individualised learning for each pupil. This team effort, with a willingness to consistently improve, is an exceptionally good role model for pupils.
- As a result, pupils' achievement is outstanding. High attainment has been maintained for the last four years. From their starting points, pupils make excellent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also demonstrate strengths in art and music and in their awareness of the cultures of other countries.
- Teaching is outstanding. The needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are especially well met, ensuring that they make the same level of progress as all other pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They behave impeccably in lessons, around the school and towards each other in the playground. Parents fully support this view and pupils say they feel very safe and bullying is unheard of.
- Attendance is high because pupils really enjoy school. They are enthusiastic and proud of the many responsibilities they undertake, from being Eco Warriors to serving on the school council and looking after each other on the playground.
- The governing body is exceptionally knowledgeable about the school's strengths and weaknesses and the quality of teaching. As well as being very supportive of all the school's activities, they ask very challenging questions about its performance. Because the school is very small, the governors are also seriously proactive about planning for its sustainability in the future.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited seven lessons, observing three teachers, one higher-level teaching assistant and one teaching assistant. She also talked to pupils about their work and heard pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6 read.
- A wide range of documents was scrutinised, including pupils' work, systems for checking progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance, safeguarding procedures, the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement, records of monitoring the quality of teaching and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, school staff and groups of pupils. Individual pupils were spoken to in lessons and around the school. A telephone conversation took place with a school advisor from the local authority.
- Seven questionnaires from members of staff were analysed. The inspector took account of the views expressed in 14 on-line responses from Parent View and during informal meetings with parents before school.

Inspection team

Anna Sketchley, Lead inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Ashill School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school and pupils are taught in two mixed-age classes, Reception with Years 1 and 2, and Years 3, 4, 5 and 6 together. Pupils attend from the village and the surrounding area.
- There are no disabled pupils in the school at the present time.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. There are currently no pupils at school action plus and no pupils with a statement of special needs.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium (extra money given to schools by the government to support, amongst others, pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- There are no pupils from minority ethnic groups or for whom English is not their first language.
- The school exceeds the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and English.
- There is a privately managed pre-school on site which was not part of this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Embed the newly developed assessment procedures for monitoring the progress of children in the Reception class in line with the new government framework.
- Include parents in the assessment process by providing them with opportunities to contribute the milestones children reach in their learning and development at home.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children usually join the Reception class with the levels of knowledge and skills expected for their age although some aspects of communication and language, especially linking sounds and letters, are below those expected.
- Reception children make outstanding progress because provision is excellent. They learn new sounds quickly because these are expertly demonstrated by the teacher and followed up with appropriate activities, such as writing the letters that form the sound in a tray of cornflour, or making letters with play dough to reinforce learning.
- The excellent organisation of the mixed age class of Reception and Year 1 and 2 pupils supports learning exceptionally well. When teaching how to ask questions to develop characters for story writing, the teacher expertly used the story of 'The Three Billy Goats Gruff', ensuring that Year 2 pupils modelled the questioning process. As a result, Reception children learned very rapidly and responded with their own questions. Follow-up writing tasks were appropriate and challenging and effectively matched the different ages and abilities of all pupils.
- New assessment procedures are being carefully introduced due to a national change in the way that progress in the early years is measured. These are well on the way to becoming embedded. Currently there are few opportunities for parents to contribute to the record of learning and development of their Reception-age child.
- Outstanding progress is maintained throughout the school, and by the time pupils reach Year 6 their attainment is usually significantly above average. Year groups are exceptionally small, especially in the current Year 6, where standards are not as high this year because more pupils have particular learning needs. However, progress remains better than expected nationally from their starting points in all three areas of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Until very recently, no pupils have been eligible for the pupil premium. The school is in receipt of a very small amount of funding for pupils and this is currently being used effectively to support a small group of pupils experiencing spelling difficulties but there is no further assessment data available because of the very small number of pupils in this group.
- The school has a particularly strong reading culture and pupils spoke enthusiastically of their keenness to read. Those who had found it difficult to learn to read really appreciate the help they have been given. One pupil remarked, 'I never thought I would ever be able to read such a long book with such small print!' Pupils read fluently and with great expression, using all the strategies they have been taught to successfully tackle unfamiliar words. Teachers take every opportunity offered in lessons for pupils to practise their reading skills by reading aloud.
- The excellent flexible teaching arrangements in the junior class mean that pupils' learning is often individually planned for them. In particular, it allows disabled pupils and those with special educational needs to be very well supported both in small groups with a teacher or by a highly skilled teaching assistant, so that they make the same rapid progress as all other pupils.
- The teaching of mathematics is especially well organised because the headteacher, teacher and higher level teaching assistant work daily with small mixed-age groups across the junior classes, so that all pupils are challenged to reach the highest standards they can.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Teachers are remarkably effective in teaching a wide range of age and ability in the two classes.
- Challenging, practical and interesting tasks, together with excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, mean that pupils are quickly engaged, enjoy learning and make rapid progress.
- Teachers' questioning is very skilful. They carefully assess and extend pupils' thinking and

learning as the lesson progresses by encouraging them to talk and discuss questions with a partner. This speeds up pupils' learning and supports their social development particularly well.

- Pupils work hard and remain focused even when working independently. Their obvious enjoyment, enthusiasm and concentration were clearly apparent in Year 4 pupils' excellent response when making three-dimensional shapes using nets. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and summing up at the end of the lesson indicated how well pupils had learned the properties of each shape, using the correct mathematical terms.
- Pupils know how to improve their work because of the helpful marking comments teachers make and the challenging targets they are set. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Targets are shared regularly with parents, forging an important partnership between home and school.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive outstanding teaching because of the expertise being developed in the school, especially for pupils with specific literacy difficulties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Records over time show that there have been no exclusions or incidents of bad behaviour or bullying since the last inspection.
- This behaviour is typical and fully supported by the views of parents, pupils and adults in the school. During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was impeccable. They are well mannered and polite in lessons, around the school and in the playground and get on extremely well together. This makes a significant contribution to their outstanding progress.
- Pupils and parents say there is no bullying in the school and pupils say they feel very safe and confident that they know how to deal with any problems should they occur. They demonstrate a very good understanding of the different types of bullying, especially when using the internet or mobile phones.
- Through the many responsibilities pupils are given and themed days undertaken for the School International Award, they enjoy excellent opportunities to develop their social skills and cultural awareness. They are proud of being members of the school council and helping around the school, especially as an Eco Warrior. The school's annual Ashill School Gazette is a very real testament to pupils' well-developed literacy skills, enjoyment in all the activities on offer and the pride they have in their school.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school benefits considerably from a small but exceptionally strong and stable team of very experienced and dedicated staff and governors. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what makes an outstanding school and shares his vision with calm commitment. He teaches daily alongside colleagues and values highly everyone's contributions. Therefore the leadership and management of the school is very much a shared responsibility and teachers fulfil their various leadership roles exceptionally well.
- Each pupil's progress is carefully tracked and discussed regularly. Teachers work exceptionally well together, and if pupils are not doing as well as they should, innovative individualised programmes are immediately put into place to help them.
- High standards have been maintained over a long period and, working so closely together, this strong team know what needs to be done to drive forward further plans for improvement. Sharp self-evaluation identifies priorities accurately. These are very well supported by clear action plans, demonstrating an excellent capacity for further development.

- Much of the school's success is as a direct result of the headteacher's expertise in the organisation and development of the quality of teaching. It is monitored consistently, especially through his own teaching role, and the national teaching standards are used rigorously to manage teachers' performance.
 - Correctly identified professional development opportunities, especially to improve writing and the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, has been extremely effective in bringing about pupils' outstanding progress. This area of the school's work is exceptionally well led.
 - Excellent leadership and management of Reception, especially links with the pre-school on site and the transition from Reception to Year 1 within the same class, enable pupils to make a seamless transfer into school life, resulting in confident learners.
 - The creative way subjects are organised and taught brings learning alive for pupils, providing them with extensive opportunities to practise their literacy and numeracy skills. These are further enhanced by a wide selection of clubs, visits and visitors.
 - Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very strong, especially the links with schools abroad.
 - Equal opportunity for different groups of pupils is promoted exceptionally well and the school does not tolerate any form of discrimination. The governing body and school staff ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously. Regular training and thorough monitoring ensure that high standards of safety are maintained.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the strengths of the school and areas for development. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that they ask extremely searching questions about the school's performance, challenging it to maintain its high standards and to improve on previous best results. Visits to classrooms and discussions with staff and pupils complement this effective monitoring of the school's work. Governors diligently track the use of the pupil premium and fully understand its current use to help improve spelling. The headteacher's performance is rigorously assessed through annual objectives and governors have a very good understanding of the management of teachers' performance and salary progression. Recently, in order to make informed decisions, governors have been effectively seeking to ensure they are knowledgeable about possible future changes to the designation and funding of the school.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	123639
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	403536

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	41
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gareth Mee
Headteacher	David Scotney
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
Telephone number	01823 480637
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Email address	ashill@somerset.sch.uk

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