

Ash Field School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120349
Local Authority	Leicester
Inspection number	339674
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Mascall

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.
The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	110
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	20
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Haydn Gopsill
Headteacher	David Bateson
Date of previous school inspection	2 October 2006
School address	Broad Avenue Leicester LE5 4PY
Telephone number	0116 273 7151
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Age group	4–19
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2010
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Boarding provision	Ash Field RSS
Social care Unique Reference Number	SC006451
Social care inspector	Joanne Vyas

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, and one social care inspector who looked at the residential provision. The inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed 14 teachers, spending the large majority of their time looking at learning. Meetings were held with governors, staff, visiting professionals and students. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at its procedures and policies for safeguarding children, records of students' progress and the 23 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how well the school monitors progress to bring about improvements in provision and ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils
- how effectively the school has addressed areas for development in teaching
- the effectiveness of assessment of pupils' work in enabling them to understand what they need to do to improve.

Information about the school

Ash Field is a day and residential school for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities that are mainly physical. The range of needs has changed since the last inspection. Many pupils now have very complex needs. The range includes medical, sensory, communication, intellectual, emotional and social needs. Several pupils have progressive conditions. Forty-six per cent of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. A quarter of pupils are at an early stage of learning English

Pupils are taught in mixed-age groups within each key stage. Students in Years 13 and 14 are educated in the post-16 provision.

Since the last inspection there has been a high turnover of teaching staff, many of whom have retired over the last few years. The school is led by a principal and a headteacher.

The school has specialist status for special educational needs in physical and sensory provision. It is also a Training School, a Leadership Partner school and has an assistive technology centre.

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: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Ash Field School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. It is extremely well led and staff are constantly seeking to improve what they do for pupils. As a result, outcomes are outstanding. All pupils make exceptional progress in their personal development. Their behaviour and attitudes are excellent. A striking feature of the school is the exceptional care and consideration that pupils show towards each other. The care, guidance and support they receive from staff are excellent. There are very close working partnerships with families and outside agencies that do much to support pupils and those close to them.

Pupils make good progress in their learning and achieve well. They clearly like school and are keen to do well. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment of all that goes on are impressive. Teaching is good. Although many teachers are new to the school, they have developed their skills well in working with pupils with a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff work effectively together and there is good teamwork in classes. Some teachers are not yet fully adept at assessing the learning of each pupil. As a result, assessment information is not yet fully used across the school to tailor work for each pupil or help them to understand how to improve, and this is recognised by senior staff as an area for development. Learning is supported by a very strong curriculum. The range of learning opportunities is exceptional and contributes much to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and has many strengths, particularly in promoting children's personal development and communication skills. As a result, they make good progress. Aspects of independent learning are restricted by the limited space and inadequate outdoor play facilities.

Post-16 provision is excellent. It has improved considerably under outstanding leadership and gives students exceptional learning opportunities to achieve highly, and prepares them extremely well for life when they leave.

The key to the success of the school is the outstanding leadership of the principal and headteacher. Their partnership is exceptionally effective in enabling the school to take the lead in many initiatives as well as running extremely smoothly on a day to day basis. Senior managers at all levels show exceptional commitment to the pupils and the school. Leaders evaluate the school's performance accurately and have a very good understanding of what works best and what will take it further forward. Staff are well supported by a knowledgeable governing body that shares the school's commitment to the very best for the pupils. The school continues to provide outstanding provision as reflected in previous inspections and is extremely well placed to sustain this in the

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future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on existing good practice to ensure that closer attention is consistently paid to assessing and fully meeting the needs of each individual pupil in lessons and showing them how to improve, so that all make the best possible progress in their learning.
 - Improve children's opportunities to develop independence and creativity in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing better facilities for outdoor play.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils are keen and enthusiastic learners who make the most of every opportunity they are given in school. They are positive about all of their lessons. Despite at times being tired and feeling unwell, they all concentrate on what is said to them and follow instructions closely and achieve well. Pupils' persistence was evident in an English lesson when they worked for a long time on understanding 'in' and 'up' and were able to complete the task. Opportunities to play an active part in lessons are greeted with enthusiasm, such as a Key Stage 3 group in mathematics advising a teacher how she could get the water out of a container when measuring volume. Some suggestions were more helpful than others but they developed an understanding of how to measure volume. Pupils with more complex needs respond well to stimulus and clearly enjoy the opportunities to make choices and learn. In a literacy lesson, a Key Stage 2 pupil's face lit up when she had to choose between two dolls and her eye pointing made it very clear which one she wanted. Although there is a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school, there are no significant differences in the progress made by pupils of different abilities or ethnic backgrounds.

Pupils talk positively about the school council and how it has brought about changes such as healthier meals at lunch time. They are very aware of what is good for them and talk knowledgeably about the importance of healthy eating. Their enthusiasm for sport and staying fit is very clear in the number of activities they are involved in both during and after school. Attendance is satisfactory overall because pupils often have to miss school through ill health. For many, attendance is very good. They enjoy the company of lots of friends and, as one pupil said, 'Everyone accepts you for who you are.'

Pupils are very much involved in the local and wider community. As a result they develop excellent skills in learning how to interact and work with a range of people. All learners become confident young people, who are proud of who they are. They do presentations about themselves and what it is to be disabled to many professionals, including trainee teachers and medical staff. They go out into other schools and into the local community, becoming tremendous role models to others for what can be achieved. In this way, they are extremely well prepared to cope with life when they leave school.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹ The quality of pupils' learning and their progress The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
	*
	2
	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

A strength of teaching is the way staff have adapted their skills to meet the increasing range of needs within the classes. Teachers are well supported by curriculum assistants and specialists in lessons. Planning of lessons is often very good, enabling staff to know precisely what they intend to do and where support will be focused. An aspect of teaching which one older pupil commented on is the 'well structured lessons'. He explained that lessons were often broken down into parts which made it easier for pupils to follow. This is very evident in many lessons and pupils often move into groups to complete tasks. Staff manage work in small groups imaginatively, and overcome the difficulties of limited space for wheelchair users, although occasionally time is lost while pupils and furniture are moved around the room. Assessment practice is generally good, but work is not always well matched to pupils' learning needs and, for example, more

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

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able pupils are not always fully challenged. There is good practice in recording what pupils do during lessons, although this is not fully consistent, and occasionally pupils do not improve their skills enough. The pace of lessons is usually good and helps pupils maintain their concentration. Teaching in the primary classes is now generally good and staff have been well supported to improve their practice.

Pupils of all ages benefit from an excellent range of thematic learning opportunities, well adapted to their particular needs. There are helpful links between subjects and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are very well promoted. Improvements are fully in place for Years 1 to 9. Further progression is planned for Years 10 and 11 to be more in line with post-16 provision. The use of information and communication technology across the curriculum is a strength. Pupils receive very well-planned opportunities to access many activities in and out of school to support their learning and personal development. The care and welfare of pupils are given the highest priority. The excellent partnership between all agencies within and outside the school ensures that the care of each pupil is of the highest quality. Pupils are very well supported by specialists such as speech and therapy, physiotherapy and counselling professionals. Such expertise contributes effectively to pupils' well-being. Parents and carers speak very highly and rightly of the commitment and care of staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The drive and ambition of the principal and the headteacher to ensure that Ash Field is a centre of excellence are shared by all staff. Senior managers are very clear about their roles and know the pupils and staff very well. The high expectations of subject managers to analyse results and monitor progress show in very detailed reports. This information ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the progress made by pupils and confirms that no group of pupils underachieve. Close tracking of provision for each child during her or his time in school ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all. School development planning is very detailed. It reflects high expectations for the school to continue to support pupils in mainstream education through its role as an assistive technology centre and through the high-level training it provides as a Training School. The school's role within the community and beyond is reflected well in its specialist status for physical and sensory provision. There are excellent links with other institutions both locally and abroad and the school contributes greatly to improving

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practice locally, nationally and globally. Excellent procedures for safeguarding ensure that pupils are kept very safe. Child protection training is very good and staff are clear about procedures. The chair of governors is very active within the school and governors have a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Links have been established with subject areas and governors plan to develop these further so that they are more actively involved in the school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children benefit from good teaching which enables them to make good progress. They make outstanding progress in developing their skills of communication, language and literacy because these aspects are very well planned. Very good attention is given to children's personal and social development and they make excellent progress in this aspect of learning. In other areas of the early learning goals, progress is good. Children are well prepared for moving to the next stage of learning because they develop a good range of skills. They clearly enjoy their time in class and join in enthusiastically with activities such as the 'hello' song. They are keen to participate, interact well with staff, and work hard, for example when tracking ribbons and moving their heads while working in the therapy room. Teaching maintains a good pace and this ensures that children generally concentrate well on the tasks set. Staff work well together and good attention is paid to health and safety and safeguarding. Signing is generally used well, although occasional opportunities are missed to make better use of pictures and symbols, such as when providing choices for lunch. Curricular planning is good, and the

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school is reviewing its method of assessing children's progress to be more closely linked to the early learning goals. Good leadership and management enable staff to adapt well to increasing numbers of pupils, and learning resources and staffing levels are good. Planning for improvement is now being formalised. While staff work hard to provide opportunities for learning in and around the school, the outdoor area is cramped. The school recognises that this area has not been developed enough to ensure that children have a full range of opportunities for exploring outside and further developing their independent learning.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Sixth form

Over the last three years, post-16 provision has improved considerably. The curriculum has been revised and is now very well focused on providing students with the skills they need to prepare for life when they leave school. There are now very good learning opportunities available, including those at a neighbouring college. Students achieve well and gain appropriate accreditation.. They benefit from good teaching which supports their basic skills very well. Staff match their teaching well to the needs of students through good use of assessment to plan activities that build well on their skills. Staff are very clear about how they support individuals. This was very evident in a numeracy lesson where a range of work was set for different students, but all were well supported by staff who ensured that each learner was able to complete the tasks set. Students take full advantage of the very good opportunities to develop independence and enjoy being treated as young adults. They carry out their roles and responsibilities around school very sensibly and provide very good role models to the younger pupils in school. These factors, together with the good progress students make in their learning, prepare them very well for life when they leave school. Care, guidance and support are excellent. There is meticulous attention paid to safeguarding and the health and safety of the students. Strong leadership has been effective in establishing provision of high quality, and leaders are clear about how it should be developed further. For example, staff and students are very aware of the limitations posed by the accommodation. Funding has been established and good plans are in place for a new sixth form block.

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These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Boarding provision

The quality of the boarding at this school is good with many outstanding features. The majority of the national minimum standards (NMS) are met, with a significant number exceeded. The school has taken appropriate action to address the recommendations contained in the previous report. These included recommendations regarding recruitment procedures.

This school provides boarding for a maximum of 18 pupils. Boarders choose to stay in residence and can opt out at any time. Boarders generally stay for one or two nights a week. The school does not offer boarding at weekends or during school holidays.

The school's ethos and underpinning philosophy is strong throughout, ensuring boarders are in a supportive and caring community within which they are valued and safe.

Boarders develop good relationships with each other and with staff. They are happy in residence. A parent said, 'My child is happy here, feels valued and is well looked after.'

Staff are committed to ensuring a good quality provision of health care for all boarders. However, health plans lack sufficient detail about healthcare conditions such as epilepsy, information has not been reviewed for some time and some information is confusing.

Consequently, staff are not fully informed about all the health needs of the boarders.

Although this has not currently had any impact on the care of the boarders, staff must be aware of the boarders' healthcare needs to ensure they are looked after competently.

Most staff are suitably trained in first aid and accidents are few and far between. Staff have good procedures for the safe management of medication. However, the school does not have written authorisation from parents to provide first aid. There are lots of opportunities for boarders to partake in physical activities. The school provides a varied, healthy diet which caters for individual needs and specialist diets.

The safety and rights of both staff and boarders are protected. Staff are competent in their knowledge of the school's safeguarding procedures. Boarders know who to talk to if they are unhappy. Boarders said staff are good at listening. Staff take them seriously and resolve issues where possible. The privacy of boarders is respected. The school's recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring all safety checks are carried out. All visitors sign in to the school and must show identification. Staff have a good knowledge of the bullying policy and bullying is rare. A boarder said, 'Everyone accepts everyone for who they are. Everyone is different.'

Staff view pupils positively and there is a relaxed, family atmosphere in residence. The

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school do not use physical intervention or sanctions. A boarder explained, 'They will tell me what I have done wrong and then let me have my say.' Boarders know what the rules are and said they are fair.

Individual support is comprehensively detailed in each boarder's file and pupil card. Pupil cards are completed by the boarder and provide staff with a quick reference of what the pupil thinks is important for people to know about them. Observations and discussions with staff showed that staff ensure each boarder's individual needs are fully met. However, records are not always dated which makes it difficult to assess whether the information is current.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for boarders; for example, staff fully support boarders with their homework each evening. There is a strong emphasis on teaching boarders life skills. Boarders highlight this as something they enjoy about boarding. A parent said, 'The independence he learns, he does at home as well, like packing his own case.' Boarders are also provided with good support for work experience and to move onto college. Staff provide significant opportunities for boarders to present their views, make choices and decisions. There is an active residential youth council where issues within residence are enthusiastically debated.

Boarding accommodation, although small, is friendly and welcoming. Boarders share rooms but know who they share with and staff ensure boarders are provided with appropriate levels of privacy. The boarding provision is clean and well maintained. The school has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds, including fire. However, the fire risk assessment kept at the school has not been reviewed for three years. A local authority representative assured the inspector that a review of fire risk at the school had been completed since the 2007 risk assessment but had not been passed onto the school. The local authority are also planning for a further fire risk assessment to be completed in the near future along with other works to enhance fire protection for the school. Other fire prevention checks, drills and health and safety checks are routinely carried out.

There is a strong senior management team who have a commitment to improving practice and ensuring the quality of the boarding provision. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. Boarders receive an individual service in residence which is designed to meet their personal needs. Staff work in partnership with parents, carers and other professionals to ensure a high quality service where the ethos is centred around meeting the individual needs and aspirations of boarders.

Staff are qualified, caring and competent. They feel well supported by each other and the senior management team. However, formal supervision is not given. There is a clear and comprehensive induction process for new staff, which includes guidance on safeguarding procedures as well as other school policies and procedures. The staffing levels in residence are sufficient to meet the needs of the boarders. A parent said, 'The staff are brilliant and always welcoming.'

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

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- ensure each child has a clear written health plan (NMS 14.6)
- ensure the school has obtained, and retains on file for each child, prior written permission from a person or body with parental responsibility for that child, for the administration of first aid (NMS 14.10)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out, recorded in writing and regularly reviewed. This specifically refers to the fire risk assessment (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that all staff receive one-to-one supervision (NMS 30.2)
- ensure written entries on the children's files are signed and dated. (NMS 18.3)

*This is the grade for the boarding provision***The effectiveness of the boarding provision****2****Views of parents and carers**

Parents and carers are very positive about the school and had nothing but praise for how it has helped their children. Many comment on the high level of support they have received from staff. Their views can be summarised by one parent who wrote, 'Since my son has been at Ash Field, he has come on so well and that is down to the teachers and teaching assistants. We cannot thank the school enough for everything that they have done. Everyone at Ash Field is so dedicated to their pupils, and are always there to help.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Ash Field School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 23 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 110 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	91	2	9	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	18	78	5	22	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	20	87	3	13	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	74	5	22	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	17	74	6	26	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	18	78	3	13	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	22	96	1	4	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	70	7	30	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	17	74	5	22	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	91	2	9	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	96	1	4	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for 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 inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



28 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Ash Field School, Leicester, LE5 4PY

Thank you very much for being so kind and friendly when we visited your school. We really enjoyed talking to you and seeing how hard you work. We found that your school is excellent. You work very hard in lessons and do well in your learning. It was good to see how happy you are in school and that you feel completely safe. The school is very good at making sure you are exceptionally well cared for. We were pleased that you have an excellent understanding of keeping healthy and it was good to hear about all the different sports and activities you are involved in. Your teachers know you well and help you learn a lot of things. We know the rooms are very small and the school is doing what it can to improve them.

We have asked the school to improve the outside play area for the youngest children so that they can have a better space to play and learn. We have also asked that the teachers always make sure that the work you do is matched closely to your learning priorities.

You have a lot to be proud of about your school.

We wish you all well for the future.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Sarah Mascall

Lead inspector

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