

Aylesham Primary School

Attlee Avenue, Aylesham, Kent, CT3 3BS

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Regular checking of pupils' achievement, coupled with good teaching, has led to a rapid increase in rates of progress since the last inspection. Standards, whilst still below national averages, are improving, especially in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good and improving. Teachers use information on pupils' progress to plan interesting and engaging lessons.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding make good progress because the money is spent effectively. As a result, these pupils attain at the same level as their classmates and gaps in achievement have closed.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because support is carefully matched to their individual needs.
- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils are confident, friendly and polite. They work together well.
- The executive headteacher, ably supported by the head of school and governing body, has accurately identified the right priorities to drive further improvement. Their attention to detail is impressive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching. Teachers do not always respond quickly enough to change or extend activities in lessons so that pupils are always working as hard as they can.
- Some children in the Reception class do not make as much progress as they might because activities do not allow them to quickly develop independent, creative ways of thinking and working.
- There is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of spelling and the linking of letters and sounds and this affects the quality of pupils' writing.
- Teachers' marking in mathematics does not always give pupils enough guidance on how to improve their work

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 11 lessons with four being jointly observed with senior leaders. They also listened to pupils read and observed some sessions of small group work.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher and head of school, two groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, leaders of literacy and mathematics, a representative from the local authority and the special educational needs coordinator who works across both schools in the federation.
- Inspectors took account of the 17 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school's own survey. Several parents were also spoken to informally at the beginning of the day.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, the school development plan, records relating to attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and the tracking of pupils' progress. They also looked closely at pupils' books.

Inspection team

Penny Spencer, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Sutherland-Harper

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Aylesham is smaller than the average-sized primary school. It is federated with Vale View Primary School, Dover, as part of the Colliers Vale Federation.
- The federation is led by an executive headteacher with each school having a designated head of school.
- A joint governing body has responsibility for both schools.
- Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is broadly average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in care of the local authority or with parents in the armed forces) is above average. There are currently no pupils in local authority care, or who have a parent in the armed forces, attending the school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and so raise pupils' achievement further, by making sure that:
 - teachers use a consistent approach to the teaching of spelling that is regularly applied by all pupils to improve the quality of their writing further
 - teachers' marking in mathematics books gives pupils more advice on how to improve their work
 - all teachers learn to adapt activities quickly during lessons to ensure pupils are always challenged to make rapid progress and reach the highest levels of their ability
 - opportunities for pupils in the Reception class to develop their own creative ways of learning are increased
 - outstanding practice within the school and across the federation is shared more regularly.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards in reading and writing have been rising since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in 2013 reflect this improvement, particularly in the number of pupils reaching the higher levels in reading and mathematics. Although standards by the end of Year 6 remain below average, standards at the end of Year 2 are broadly average.
- Progress in mathematics has accelerated because of concerted action by leaders and teachers to identify key areas of weakness and address these swiftly. As a result, the slow decline in mathematics achievement at the end of Year 6 has been reversed in 2013 and considerably more pupils are now attaining at the higher levels.
- Progress is accelerating rapidly across most year groups as a result of steps taken by school leaders. In 2013, the proportion of pupils exceeding expected progress was high. Most recent assessment information shows pupils in the current Year 6 have already made the progress that might be expected for the end of the year, with many exceeding this, in all subjects. More pupils in all other year groups are now consistently working above the levels expected for their age.
- Evidence, including work in pupils' books, shows that pupils are making good progress in all subjects. However, good quality creative writing is often spoilt by poor spelling and an inconsistent approach to the linking of letters and sounds (phonics).
- Results in the national screening check in phonics at the end of Year 1 were slightly below national expectations in 2013. However, as a result of the recent improvements to teaching, the majority of pupils currently in Year 1 are now meeting national expectations.
- Pupils enjoy reading and were confident to talk to inspectors about the books they were reading. Younger pupils used their phonic knowledge effectively, reflecting the school's revised approach to teaching early reading skills. Less able older readers relied on a number of strategies to help them read unfamiliar words, but were enthusiastic and very willing to have a go. During a good guided reading session observed in Year 3, pupils were being taught effectively to sound out words as they read together.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and their attainment compares well to that of similar groups nationally. This is because extra support is very carefully matched to their needs.
- The attainment of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium has risen and the gap between them and their classmates has closed. In the 2013 national tests at the end of Year 6 there was no difference in the attainment of eligible pupils and their peers in either English or mathematics. Many pupils in receipt of support through the pupil premium made even better progress than their peers. Assessment information for the current Year 6 pupils shows this pattern has been continued, with little or no difference between the achievement of different groups.
- Pupils enter the Reception class with skills and abilities that are generally below the typical expectations for their age group, particularly in areas of language development and mathematics. Most children make good progress and reach the expected levels for their age by the time they move into Year 1. However, very few exceed these expectations because activities occasionally prevent them from developing independent ways of learning, or offer enough challenge to speed up their learning further.

The quality of teaching is good

- Consistently good teaching helps all groups of pupils to achieve well. Teachers are extremely committed and are always striving to improve their skills even further.
- Teachers use the school's comprehensive, accurate assessment information to plan work that enables pupils to make good progress. Where teaching is best, teachers quickly recognise when

pupils may be finding the work too easy or too hard and adapt the lesson to ensure pupils succeed. However, this good practice is not yet widespread and when tasks are not adapted quickly enough pupils' progress slows a little.

- Teachers plan lessons that allow pupils to work together and share ideas. Pupils enjoy learning in this way and were keen to explain to inspectors how this method helped them achieve and make good progress. This contributes effectively to pupils' moral and social development.
- Teachers use technology effectively and pupils are confident when using computers. This was observed during a good lesson in the computer suite where Year 4 pupils were successfully creating a book, using presentation slides that involved importing relevant pictures from the internet.
- Teaching assistants work closely with teachers to ensure they are effective in supporting the pupils they work with. They are well trained to deliver specific programmes of study and, as a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress.
- Very good use is made of the pupil premium funding to support eligible pupils with extra tuition on a one-to-one basis or in small groups. The very high quality of this teaching is a key factor in the improved results and accelerated progress for this group of pupils.
- Marking is regular and detailed, particularly in English books. Pupils have clear understanding of what they need to do next and how they can make their work better, and respond to this guidance regularly. Pupils also assess their own performance accurately. In mathematics books, opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' comments are less frequent and advice on how to improve is not always clear.
- An inconsistent approach to teaching phonics has led to weaknesses in pupils' spelling. However, this is a key priority identified by leaders and the school is now beginning to tackle this through a more consistent approach to teaching phonics and spelling across different year groups.
- Progress for some children in the Reception classes is not as good as it could be because planning does not identify exactly what they need to achieve within a set time. Activities do not always offer pupils enough opportunities to extend their understanding by working on their own.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils behave well. They are keen to learn and want to do well. The strong focus on promoting good attitudes to learning is ensuring that all pupils develop the skills of listening to each other and working sensibly together
- Pupils feel safe. They know how to look after themselves and how to stay safe. They are aware of the dangers of the internet and how to stay safe when online.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare and are confident that adults would deal with it quickly if it did happen. The playground buddy system is effective in ensuring pupils are looked after, as well as giving older pupils opportunities to take on extra responsibilities. Pupils were observed enthusiastically discussing, with adults, the application process for the up and coming posts this term.
- Relationships between pupils and with adults are good. There is a strong feeling of mutual respect which is supported by the consistently applied behaviour policy. Pupils are polite and helpful towards visitors.
- Attendance is broadly average and is rising. The family liaison officer works extremely successfully with families to support good attendance and promote good behaviour.
- Parents who responded to Parent View or to the school's own survey were overwhelmingly positive that the school looked after their children well and kept them safe.

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteacher provides excellent direction for the school to improve. She works closely with the head of school and other leaders to make sure teachers are supported and

trained in order to improve pupils' achievement further.

- Leaders know exactly what needs to be done to ensure the school continues to improve. Action plans are detailed and regularly reviewed to make sure they are having a positive impact on learning and teaching. Leaders are not afraid to change things rapidly if they are not working.
- Excellent use is made of the formal partnership within the federation and membership of a hub of seven schools to develop accurate systems for checking assessment information and to deliver joint training. Opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice are less frequent but improving.
- The development of future leaders within the partnerships is a strength of the federation. Subject leaders who met with inspectors were extremely knowledgeable and confident in their ability to lead. Evidence of their impact can be seen in the improved rates of progress for pupils.
- Leaders at all levels are fully involved in setting priorities and in checking teacher performance through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and planning checks. Combined with the increased levels of achievement for all groups of pupils, this shows that the school's capacity for improvement is strong.
- Targets set for teachers are carefully matched to pupils' progress, school priorities and their own professional development needs. Regular meetings to assess pupil progress allow leaders to monitor teacher performance carefully before any salary increases are awarded. The improved achievement seen by all groups of pupils, coupled with the strong respectful attitudes between teachers and pupils, shows how the school is effective in promoting equal opportunities.
- The special educational needs manager is experienced and extremely effective. She has developed excellent systems across the schools in the federation that have successfully raised the achievement for pupils who may find learning difficult.
- The curriculum is varied and exciting. Pupils enjoy the cross-curricular topics and the many opportunities they offer to visit places of interest. Opportunities for pupils to participate in music, art and sporting activities within school and with other schools in the local area are frequent and these promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education effectively.
- Pupils enjoy the many opportunities during regular physical education lessons and after-school clubs to be active and keep healthy. Their views are regularly sought to ensure there is a wide variety of different sport or dance activities to experience. The new government funding for sport has not yet been allocated but the school has a comprehensive action plan to ensure it is used effectively when it arrives.
- Parents are very pleased with the school and are happy with the progress their children make. Over 95% of parents would recommend the school to another parent.
- The local authority has been instrumental in creating the federation and in supporting the executive headteacher in her role. As the school has continued to improve, support has rightly lessened.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are experienced and extremely well informed. The Chair of the Governing Body uses her considerable experience in education to good effect and is instrumental in ensuring other governors are well trained. Regular training sessions or workshops are arranged during meetings. These ensure governors can interpret assessment information accurately and become confident to ask challenging questions. Separate teams for each school ensure individual issues are managed well, whilst maintaining a strategic overview of the federation. Governors know how leaders check the quality of teaching and that teachers only move up the pay scale if they have met their targets. Governors are aware of how well pupils achieve compared with other pupils nationally, and how different groups of pupils achieve. They plan their spending carefully. Funds used for pupils supported by the pupil premium are monitored closely to ensure that this group is making good progress. Governors fully meet their statutory responsibilities and safeguarding requirements are met.

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	118563
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426651

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	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Valerie Clough
Headteacher	Executive headteacher - Abigail Birch Head of School - Katie Gibbs
Date of previous school inspection	13-14 October 2010
Telephone number	01304 840392
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