

Amesbury Archer Primary School

Shears Drive, Archers Gate, Amesbury, Wiltshire SP4 7XX

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils who left last year was not as good as that of other pupils. The school cannot show that the progress of similar pupils currently in the school has improved.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not focused enough on helping them to attend well, to catch up or to continue to work at a high level.
- Teachers and leaders do not always rigorously plan and review the actions taken to improve the progress of individual pupils, in order to be sure that they are the best things to do.
- The school’s system for recording assessment information is not accurate enough. This means leaders and governors cannot analyse what is going on for groups of pupils or year groups well enough, so they cannot make sure school actions aimed at raising achievement are having the best effect.
- Sometimes teachers do not ensure that pupils fully focus on the task they are doing. Even though pupils do not misbehave, this wastes learning time.

The school has the following strengths

- Exciting activities and stimulating teaching help children in the early years (Reception classes) to make better progress than older pupils.
- Pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 make very rapid progress in learning to read.
- Leaders have improved teaching since the last inspection, and are continuing to improve it. This improvement to teaching was reflected in a higher proportion of Year 6 pupils reaching the standards expected in 2015 than in 2014.
- The headteacher, governors and senior team have led excellent, innovative work to support pupils’ social and emotional skills, with a very positive impact on their mental health and behaviour. These approaches have laid the groundwork for the school to do well, once academic leadership is sharpened.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure the system used to record assessment information is accurate and precise, and use the resulting data to:
 - make a consistently sharp analysis of patterns in pupils' progress
 - identify appropriate actions to improve pupils' achievement.
- Improve the success of actions taken to improve the progress of individual pupils, by:
 - identifying at the planning stage what the decisions made are designed to achieve
 - reviewing the success of the actions taken against these aims.
- Ensure that pupils make the most of learning time in lessons, by:
 - pitching work at the right level in any starter activities that take place
 - providing activities that keep pupils higher up the school as interested as those in the early years.
- Improve the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils, more rigorously checking their progress and attendance and the impact of the money used to support them. An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have focused on improving pupils' welfare very effectively but not given enough weight to some key areas of academic achievement. They have not established tight enough assessment and evaluation systems to identify the best ways to raise achievement as rapidly as is needed.
- A cycle of 'first plan, then do, then review' is not fully established as standard practice for academic improvement. For example, the leader responsible for pupils who have special needs, who has only been in post for a term, has rightly identified that plans for these pupils do not have consistently sharp targets that are reviewed effectively to ensure they are working. The 'nurture' group set up to allow a few pupils to work in a supportive environment away from others has very clear documented aims for pupils' social and emotional development, but the academic programme for each pupil is not clear enough.
- Though leaders have started to explore ways of improving the use of funds for disadvantaged pupils, this has not been given enough priority. Improvements to this area were identified in a review visit made by the local authority at the request of the governors in June 2015. Funds are not currently used systematically enough to ensure rapid progress, even though the school's great care and concern for individuals ensures that no-one is unnoticed.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has risen because all individuals with low attendance are targeted. The school has not analysed attendance by groups in order to look to see what whole-school actions might help improve the group's attendance overall. For example, the additional funding has not been used specifically to support disadvantaged pupils' attendance.
- The headteacher has led the school to make great strides in providing very effective support to some troubled and challenging children. Staff, governors and leaders are very ambitious for all pupils, and very committed. The issue for the school is to get the balance right between work to support pupils socially and emotionally, and work to support them academically. The senior leaders are right that ensuring good welfare or mental health is a priority, but have not yet dovetailed this with academic improvement.
- Leaders' observations of learning in lessons make a good contribution to improving teaching, as does formal management of teachers' performance. Targets are set after lesson observations and followed up effectively the next time the teacher is seen. Literacy and numeracy leaders are involved well in monitoring pupils' work and teachers' plans, and providing training for teachers.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff training is up to date and the strong approach to pastoral care greatly enhances its capacity to safeguard children. Leaders engage very well with parents and carers. They, in turn, trust the headteacher, much valuing his drive and visible presence at the gate and around the school. One described him as an 'amazing headteacher ... who makes you feel noticed and welcome'.
- The curriculum has been crafted by the staff as a whole to draw on the local environment as well as national events and national guidance. For example, classes are given names to stimulate pupils' interest in local history, such as 'Beaker Class', 'Trajan Class' and 'Sarsen Class'. Pupils in Year 6 described how they had looked at the recent terrorist attack in Paris and discussed its impact. The curriculum is evaluated and if necessary altered through staff discussion. The school is aware, for example, that at the moment science work focuses more on content knowledge than investigation.
- The school is particularly aware of the needs of pupils who have a parent in the armed forces, and uses additional funds for service children very effectively to support their welfare. However, it does not shy away from tackling subjects such as Afghanistan. An assembly drew sensitively on these pupils' knowledge of the situation there, talking of issues relating to schooling for girls in that country to support a message of aspiration for pupils in Amesbury Archer. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The national physical education (PE) and sports premium is put to good use, with a wide range of PE activities. The impact of this funding is evaluated, for example in terms of how many pupils participate. The numerous after-school activities include tae kwon do and tri-golf as well as more traditional sports. Together with the other extra activities such as choir and first aid, they provide good additional opportunities for learning.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance is effective. Governors have a good clarity of vision. They understand how good teaching is and interrogate the information about pupils' progress and attainment that they have. They are active and engaged, and committed to improvement.

- Governors hold the school to account on the information they are given, for example over the lowering of exclusions. They have ensured that performance management systems are established and ask questions about the decisions made.
 - Weaknesses in the ongoing assessment of pupils currently in the school have meant that the governors have not had sharp enough information to make a fully effective evaluation of the use of funds for disadvantaged pupils. In other ways, financial management is strong. Governors are planning strategically to minimise the impact of the many changes to staff personnel and pupil numbers.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Most schools are currently developing systems to assess and record information about how well pupils are doing in the new curriculum. The new curriculum applied to Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 last year, and now applies also to Years 2 and 6. This school has made a start, but assessment currently requires improvement because the judgements recorded and the system used to analyse the judgements do not give securely accurate data. This means that the information is not fine-tuned enough to allow senior managers to draw useful conclusions about progress or, ultimately, to be sure that reporting to parents is fully accurate.
- Teachers assess whether pupils are reaching the standards expected nationally for their age. At the end of term they translate their assessments to a numeric grade, which is recorded centrally. At the end of the year the school is then able to count how many points the pupil moved on during the year, and produce averages for the different classes and year groups. However, no consistency has been established, either across or within year groups, in what the numbers mean. Also, the assessment grades recorded are not always accurately matched to pupils' work. Some work had been recorded as close to expected levels, but was actually typical of pupils a couple of years younger.
- By and large, teachers provide work that is pitched at the right level for pupils of different abilities. They think of ways in which less-able pupils can be supported to do activities that let them get at the main learning points. They provide the most-able pupils with work that challenges them. As a result, pupils make visible progress. Additional adults in the classroom usually make a good contribution to the teaching of different ability groups. Sometimes at the start of lessons the activities are too hard for some pupils, so they sit passively while others find answers.
- In Reception, teachers choose each lesson's activities very well to interest the children. Some pupils higher up the school appear less interested and sometimes do not fully engage with what is happening. As a result, they miss out on developing or consolidating understanding.
- Teachers make sure pupils know what is expected of them in lessons, and this is one reason why lessons run smoothly. Relationships are positive, so pupils feel secure, and discipline is good.
- Teachers question pupils well, focusing on the points they particularly want pupils to learn, showing good subject knowledge.
- Phonics (the links between sounds and letters) is taught very well in Reception and Key Stage 1. This strength provides an example of good leadership – the school was a pilot school and leaders have made sure that despite staff changes, adults are confident and effective in their teaching. The school is alert to occasions where family circumstances present difficulties with reading at home, and provides support through extra reading in school where needed.
- Teachers are following the school policy in that they mark work in great detail and often give pupils an additional task or challenge as a result. Pupils are very positive about the system, saying that it helps them know how well they are doing and how to improve. Most are taking the opportunity to respond by trying the additional tasks, but some older pupils have not yet formed this habit. The school is on the case, monitoring pupils' responses and following them up.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Welfare is extremely well

promoted and personal development good.

- A comprehensive system provides support to pupils at all levels, from formal safeguarding to informal counselling. Pupils feel very safe; one said they felt safer in school than outside. They stressed that they could go to all teachers if they had a concern, and particularly the member of staff employed as a counsellor. They are involved in making sure others feel safe and secure. For example, pupils themselves monitor potentially problematic areas such as the toilets, saying 'it stops any disruptive behaviour'.
- Disabled pupils are included in activities and are sensitively supported by additional adults and other pupils when needed, including at play.
- Pupils are developing an awareness of their own personal strengths and areas that need work. Those in the nurture group showed they were learning to evaluate their feelings and recognise strategies to manage them. They showed they could offer advice to others on a friendly basis. One said of the group, 'We are caring.'
- Pupils show a good understanding of and ability to respect others' views. For example, Year 6 pupils described a debate on whether there should be air strikes on Syria, and showed they understood that people could honestly come to different, yet valid, conclusions.
- Pupils' understanding of and commitment to success in learning are not as well developed as their understanding of the need for good behaviour and safety. The school has recognised that some pupils remain passive in lessons, and have to be pushed to fully engage in some learning activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The school is a calm and happy place. Lessons proceed in an orderly way. Teachers feel that they are supported with behaviour management, should there be a need. Pupils say any incidents are dealt with quickly. Pupils play cooperatively and follow the instructions of supervising staff. They line up respectfully and enter the building in a sensible way.
- Pupils spoken to understand what bullying is and do not see it as an issue because it is dealt with. Most parents who sent in comments or completed the questionnaire have a similar view. One wrote that if bullying were to raise its head, 'I am sure the headteacher would be all over it in a heartbeat.' The school policy gives attention to providing help for both the bully and the bullied.
- Behaviour is improving. One parent wrote of 'visible improvements in the methods used to control disruptive pupils'. Exclusions were high in 2014, but although they are still above average they have been significantly reduced. The number of repeat exclusions has also reduced, showing the success of school strategies. New arrivals at the school form a high proportion of excluded pupils, until they feel the full impact of the school's support.
- The overall attendance of pupils is below average but improving. The school keeps a close check on the attendance of individuals and takes action to support them where needed. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils was below that of disadvantaged pupils nationally in 2014 and low compared to all pupils nationally. Inspectors looked at a breakdown of these pupils' attendance since September 2015, which the school had not previously analysed. It showed an improvement compared to the same period in 2014, though it was still not at the level reached by similar pupils nationally.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The school has improved its outcomes over the last two years, but they are not yet securely good. The main issue for the school is that it has not made enough difference to the progress of disadvantaged pupils as a whole. Though there have been improvements, the systems to identify need and target funds are not working well enough. For instance, inspectors found examples where although disadvantaged pupils were not reaching the standards expected nationally, they were not receiving targeted help to enable them to do so.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs do not yet make consistently good progress. The school can point to successes with individuals, but progress is hindered because academic targets are not always sharp enough.
- Pupils who have had special arrangements made for them because they are temporarily unable to cope with full-time schooling have all the required paperwork in legal terms, but they do not have an individual academic programme to ensure maximum progress.

- In general, the progress of the most-able pupils has improved since the last inspection. They are doing more extended writing and learning at a deeper level in most year groups.
- Published data for past pupils do not fully reflect the outcomes the school is achieving now. This is partly because many pupils included in the data spent some of their education elsewhere. It is also because published data for Key Stage 2 counts progress over a full four years. In this school the recent progress the pupils made (specifically during Year 6) was much better than progress earlier in their school careers. The recent progress of that year group was good in reading and excellent in writing and mathematics.
- Children in Reception make rapid progress. Pupils do very well in phonics and writing in Reception and Year 1. Most pupils in Year 2 last year, where assessment was measured against the old curriculum, achieved well, particularly in reading and in mathematics. However, disadvantaged pupils did not make as much progress through the year as others in that year group.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years provision is better than that of the main school. This is because it has the same strengths in welfare and provision for personal development, but a more consistently rigorous focus on academic progress.
- The classrooms are vibrant and exciting places to be. This encourages the children to indulge their curiosity and to be creative. They develop confidence and learn to work with others. This was highly evident during the inspection when one afternoon a whole room was given over to making dens. Children were busily working out ways to secure sticks to hold up the roof coverings, and were completely engrossed in what they were doing. Writing had a high profile, with children writing names for their dens and even, in some cases, rules that must be followed by anyone visiting!
- Adults ask questions in a very effective way. For example, a child was choosing two pictures from aliens with different numbers of eyes to make seven altogether. He chose an alien with seven eyes initially, and through the adult's probing questions had a moment of illumination that he really needed another with no eyes to complete the task.
- The strong teaching has a very good impact on children's outcomes. Last year, children entered the school with most skills and understanding at the levels expected for their age. Their literacy skills were lower. By the end of the year the proportion achieving what is expected for their age was above the national average in most areas, including in literacy. This shows that most made very rapid progress. Pupils leave Reception with skills and understanding that make them ready to start Year 1.
- The children are looked after extremely well, and statutory welfare requirements are met. Their behaviour is very good indeed, because they are accustomed from the first days to clear routines and a strong focus on social skills. They are confident to ask questions and talk to adults about their learning.
- The early years leader ensures that planning is effective and assessment is thorough. Assessment draws well on contributions from parents as well as staff. As a result, teachers design work to help children learn in a structured way, whatever their current understanding.
- Leaders and other staff make sure that they take good steps to engage parents. Parents are kept informed and their feedback is sought. This gives their child a coherent experience of learning. One parent or carer wrote of their child's 'amazing progress'. Another said, 'The support he receives from his teacher and teaching assistant are second to none.'
- Though there are many outstanding features in the early years provision it is judged good because of weaker areas in the management of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. In common with the main school, the funding is not deployed, tracked or evaluated stringently enough. Disadvantaged pupils made good progress last year, but the progress of others was faster.

School details

Unique reference number	133775
Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	10009238

This inspection 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	344
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Louise Holm
Headteacher	Neil Mawdsley
Telephone number	01980 625944
Website	www.amesburyarcher.wilts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@amesburyarcher.wilts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 February 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets the current government floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school is bigger than average, and has grown since the last inspection. It has two classes in each year group. It also has a small nurture group, which comprises pupils from several year groups who are temporarily taught separately from others.
- Children in the early years (in Reception classes) attend full time.
- About a third of the pupils in the school have a parent in the armed services. The proportion of pupils who join or leave part way through their primary school education is high compared to other schools.
- The turnover of staff has also been high. This partly reflects the turnover in the local population.
- Although an average number of pupils have special educational needs, the proportion with more severe needs is high.
- An average proportion of pupils are eligible for support through additional funding the school receives for disadvantaged pupils (the pupil premium).

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team made observations in lessons, covering all year groups.
- They also made observations around the school, including in the playground, and watched an assembly.
- Inspectors talked to pupils and studied pupils' work. They also looked at the results of an online questionnaire completed by 26 pupils.
- The lead inspector met with some of the governors, and met with a representative of the local authority. Inspectors looked at reports prepared by the local authority about the school.
- Inspectors talked to staff and looked at questionnaires completed by staff.
- Inspectors met with senior managers and the headteacher, and looked at documentation provided by the school. This included, for example, records of how funds are spent, records of pupils' attainment, safeguarding information and records about behaviour.
- An inspector talked with some parents collecting their children from school. Inspectors also read the responses and comments from the 51 parents who completed the online questionnaire, Parent View. One letter from a parent was also considered as part of the inspection evidence.

Inspection team

Deborah Zachary, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wendy Hanrahan	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Marklove	Ofsted Inspector

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