

Anstey First School

Anstey, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0BY

Inspection dates

14–15 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and governors have ensured that this very small school is at the heart of its community. Leaders are ambitious for the school and have a great determination to make further improvements. As a consequence, the school's reputation within the community is good and numbers of pupils joining the school continue to grow.
- Pupils' outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen since the last inspection and were above the national average in 2015.
- Pupils' outcomes in the phonics skills check at the end of Year 1 are broadly in line with the national figures.
- Teaching is good. Individual learning plans for each pupil are being developed. These show that an increasing number of pupils are making good progress from their starting points. However, teachers do not always plan for pupils' next steps in learning so that they know how to improve their work.
- The behaviour of pupils is good in and around the school. Pupils support each other well in the mixed-age classes and accommodate well the growing number of pupils with additional needs. As a result, pupils are developing empathy for and understanding of difference and diversity.
- Parents, pupils and staff all contribute well to the developing curriculum that suits the needs of the community. Topics are selected carefully, making good use of the school's rural roots and location.
- Almost without exception, pupils, staff, governors and parents speak passionately about how well leaders care for each pupil in the school.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe there. They and parents like the friendly, supportive atmosphere created by the headteacher.

The school is not yet outstanding because

- Provision for the very youngest children does not yet give them regular access to the outdoors to extend their learning.
- Opportunities are missed to enable children in the Reception class to select activities that interest them, to talk to each other and to adults about their learning, and to develop their communication skills.
- Teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their basic skills in English and mathematics.
- Pupils do not have high enough expectations of the quality and presentation of their writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Speed up each pupil's rate of progress in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils have regular opportunities to write at length to practise and hone their knowledge and understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - teachers routinely plan for pupils' next steps in their learning so that each pupil knows what they can do to improve their work
 - pupils have higher expectations of the presentation of their written work.
- Improve provision and outcomes in the early years by:
 - ensuring that parents and all staff contribute to an accurate baseline assessment and progress is regularly checked to highlight any barriers to individual children's learning
 - ensuring that children have more opportunities to talk about their learning, particularly when they select an activity in which they are interested
 - developing further the outside area so that children have more regular access to the outdoors to enhance their learning
 - continuing to develop good links and share good practice with the on-site pre-school and other outstanding early years providers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher leads a relentless drive for improvement and is well supported by governors. The school's comprehensive plans for improvement accurately identify areas that can be improved and subject action plans map out what needs to be done and by when.
- The headteacher regularly checks on the quality of teaching and, as a teaching headteacher, has good oversight of how well each of the pupils is improving. Regular checks of pupils' books and visits to the two classes provide information about where pupils are not doing as well as they should and the barriers to learning. This information is used well by the headteacher to plan for training to ensure that staff have the expertise and knowledge to further improve the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher has recently relinquished responsibility for the leadership of English and mathematics. Other staff now lead these areas. Supported by the headteacher, leadership of these two subject areas is developing well. Clear areas for improvement, training for staff and monitoring of the impact of actions is having a positive impact. Although work has already been done to improve writing, the school clearly understands that this remains an area that needs further development.
- The headteacher uses every opportunity to remind pupils of the school's culture of 'respect, resilience and responsibility'. The curriculum, while still developing, provides good opportunities to develop pupils' creativity and independence in their learning. Interesting themes, launched with 'WOW days', capitalise on the school's rural location and history. Development of the school grounds to include raised vegetable beds and chickens helps to make pupils' learning 'real and relevant'. Such visits to, for example, Dimsdale and Church Farms, Newnham Park in Cambridge and local places of worship including a mosque and gurdwara, supplement the curriculum.
- The school makes effective use of the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Support inside and outside of the classroom has ensured that this funding is having a positive impact on individual pupils' learning. Good use has been made of additional sports funding. This has ensured that more pupils take part in sporting activities and that the school has been successful in competitive sports.
- Regular discussions provide pupils with the opportunity to deepen their thinking about a range of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues and explore fundamental British values. Pupils enjoy taking on additional responsibilities in their class and for the whole school, for example in the school council.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Since the previous inspection and after many different leaders, governors made the strategic decision to appoint a full-time, permanent headteacher with positive impact. The governing body is prioritising funding to develop the early years 'unit' which they are clear will enhance the learning of the very youngest children in the school and ensure the sustainability of pre-school provision.
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the quality of education provided by the school. They know about the quality of teaching in the school because they meet with the headteacher and visit the school regularly.
 - Governors have a good range of skills that benefit the school. They have specific responsibilities linked to particular areas of the curriculum or aspects of the school's work. This in-depth knowledge has enabled them to drive improvement in partnership with the headteacher.
 - Governors have ensured that additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is effectively spent. They regularly check on how this funding and additional sports funding is supporting pupils' development.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the link between teachers' salary progression, performance and pupils' progress. They ensure that the headteacher's performance management and teachers' appraisals are carried out effectively and are directly linked to the school's current priorities.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. Senior leaders ensure that all staff are fully trained and clearly understand their responsibilities. A comprehensive induction booklet is completed with all staff, including those who are temporary. Regular training has ensured that governors and leaders appoint staff who are suitably qualified and safe to work with pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The strength of the good relationships between adults and pupils is clearly evident in classes and this contributes to good learning.
- Lessons are well organised and interesting, particularly those sessions where pupils are taught as a whole school. Pupils say these 'are fun'.
- Teachers use the skills of learning support assistants very effectively to support pupils. As a result, the majority of individual pupils and groups make at least expected progress from their starting points and an increasing proportion make better than expected progress.
- The teaching of reading and mathematics is effective. Consequently, almost all pupils make the progress expected in these subjects. However, there is some inconsistency in writing. As a result, current pupils' progress in writing lags behind other areas. This is because teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to write at length and practise their writing skills. Pupils' application of their knowledge, understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and presentation of their written work is not as strong as other elements of literacy.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is effective and pupils use these skills well when reading. However, they are not as adept at using these skills when writing. As a consequence, pupils' progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is less than in reading and mathematics.
- Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching over time evidences that teachers plan learning that supports the needs of the majority of pupils.
- Teachers use the school's new marking and feedback system well to help pupils to improve or to encourage them to think carefully about their work. The headteacher is clear that the recently introduced system, while still developing, is having an impact on pupils' learning and encouraging a good level of independence. This is apparent when speaking with pupils but less so when they respond in their books.
- There is some good practice in teachers' questioning to gauge pupils' understanding. This is used well to adapt teaching, challenge pupils and guide them to a better understanding. This was clearly seen in a mathematics lesson. Pupils were asked to use multi-link to build three different-sized model chairs, linked to Goldilocks and the Three Bears. The teacher skilfully asked pupils about how many cubes they would need for the next size chair and how they might make a sensible guess. However, in some lessons, information on pupils is not used well enough to match work to earlier learning. Not all pupils, for example, have the opportunity to be challenged or to challenge themselves.
- Pupils are provided with opportunities to use the skills they learn in writing and mathematics in other areas of the curriculum, and particularly in science. However, good-quality writing is not yet fully encouraged in other subjects, like geography, history and religious education. It is evident that pupils are more than capable of writing well and at length when encouraged to do so. One such example is the termly letter pupils write to governors to explain what they have been learning during the term. The sense of audience, content and presentation demonstrates good skill and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils know about bullying and the various forms it takes. They say 'there is no bullying here'. Pupils are confident that the headteacher deals with any poor behaviour if it occurs. The school's recent development of the motto 'be the best you can be at Anstey' is constantly reinforced by staff. How pupils should respond to each other and their learning is reiterated in the mantra 'respect, resilience, responsibility' to which pupils respond well.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know how to keep themselves safe in school and out in the community. They are clear on how to be safe on the internet and when using social media.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral and social development extremely well. Pupils are very well cared for. A parent commented that 'the small numbers mean that every child gets the kindness and attention they need'. Pupils likewise say that they receive the help and support they need if they experience any difficulties.
- Opportunities for pupils to appreciate diversity in modern Britain are planned well. The headteacher is developing a curriculum which is ensuring that pupils have experiences that help them to understand

other cultures and those 'who may be different'. During an assembly, pupils were shown the world news which one pupil said 'was to see what was happening in the world – some of which is happy and some is sad'.

- Parents speak passionately about the school's caring 'family' ethos. They report that since her arrival the headteacher has made 'huge improvements' and 'has given us regular opportunities to express our views as parents which are always listened to and acted upon'.
- Parents, staff and pupils made a particular point of commenting on the headteacher's desire to support the local community, its families and the pupils in the school. For example, after-school clubs and learning have been increased to meet the needs of parents. One commented 'Anstey School is unique in its set-up and run to perfection' and another said 'I cannot recommend the school highly enough'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Teachers are supported well by teaching assistants in managing behaviour. This is done discreetly and appropriately. A multi-sensory room supports some pupils to become 'ready for learning'.
- The headteacher has developed a system that enables all pupils to earn 'Anstey bucks' for their good behaviour, which the pupils really welcome and respond to well.
- Pupils report that behaviour is good in and around the school. However, they say that they do sometimes find they are distracted by 'children who can't help their poor behaviour'. Despite this, pupils play well together and help each other if there is a problem. They say they find it helpful to be in mixed-age classes because they 'can learn from everyone'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are largely good, even when learning is not as challenging for some pupils as it might be. On these occasions pupils can become inattentive, but this does not occur routinely.
- The school's system for recording incidents of any poor behaviour is very comprehensive, followed up well by the headteacher and always involving parents.
- The school promotes regular attendance in a variety of ways and, as a result, pupils' attendance is improving. Pupils are eager to come to school and parents are supportive of the need to ensure that pupils arrive on time and ready for the school day.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. This is because each pupil has an individual learning plan that teachers use well to plan for the next steps in learning.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has risen over the last three years. It was above the national average in 2014 and 2015 because teaching has improved. The progress made by pupils from the end of the early years to the end of Key Stage 1 is good.
- The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 in 2015 is in line with the national average and has risen in the last two years. This is because teaching of phonics has improved and pupils use their phonics skills well in their reading. However, pupils do not yet use their phonics skills well in writing.
- Current information suggests that progress in reading and mathematics is good. Evidence in pupils' books and observations in classrooms show that expectations of the quality and quantity of pupils' work in writing throughout the school are too low. As a consequence, progress in writing lags behind reading and mathematics.
- In 2015, there were no disadvantaged pupils eligible for the pupil premium in Key Stage 1. There were also too few pupils in Year 1 to be able to comment on this group's achievement. Current information suggests that this group's progress compares favourably to that of their classmates throughout the school.
- The progress of pupils who are disabled and those who have special educational needs compares favourably with that of their classmates. This is because they are given targeted support inside and outside of the classroom, to which they respond very positively.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- A very small number of children enter the Reception class each year. There is a variety of starting points influenced by the school's growing proportion of children with special educational needs. In September 2015, children started school with skills and knowledge broadly typical for their age.
- The proportion of children who reached the expected level of development at the end of 2015 was below the national average. However, these children made at least expected progress from their low starting points.
- Children's progress is tracked well. Staff plan learning that interests the children, particularly in 'whole-school learning sessions' that are held regularly with the older pupils. For example, linked to their topic, children were encouraged to taste a variety of Scottish foods. Older pupils supported the younger children to try haggis, smoked salmon and salty porridge. However, there were many examples when the children would have benefited from adults asking them questions about their experience to develop their language and responding skills.
- The early years provision is beginning to develop into a well-organised and well-equipped learning environment. There is a range of good-quality resources both inside and outdoors. However, children do not get enough opportunities to explore their own learning or to go outside to extend their learning experience.
- Although adults support learning with some well-planned activities, the development of language skills appropriate to the age and stage of these children is sometimes limited.
- There are clear plans for improvement that are linked to whole-school priorities, for example developing children's independence. There are, however, also more strategic plans to expand the early years 'unit' to accommodate children from the age of 2 and to extend the area to better incorporate free access to the outdoors.

School details

Unique reference number	117218
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001162

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	19
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wilfrid Dimsdale
Headteacher	Amy Myers
Telephone number	01763 848346
Website	www.anstey.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@anstey.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 September 2010

Information about this school

- This is a very small, rural school, where all pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or who are disabled is above the national average and growing. There are two pupils with a statement of need or education, health and care plan, but a number are currently being assessed.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are eligible for additional funding is below the national average.
- There are two classes; one for Reception and Year 1, the other for Year 2, Year 3 and Year 4.
- The school is growing. The governing body is in the process of applying to have the age range of the school lowered to accommodate children from age 2. The on-site pre-school will become part of the school's new early years unit which includes improved access to outdoor learning.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of staff changes. Both class teachers are relatively new to the school. After several part-time or interim headteachers, the governing body secured a full-time, permanent appointment in January 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Six lessons were observed, the majority of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made two shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- The inspector heard some pupils read from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and the other members of the senior leadership team, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and three governors, and groups of pupils. The inspector also spoke on the telephone to a local authority representative.
- A range of evidence was examined, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, the systems to track pupils' progress, policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. The inspector also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- Ofsted's Parent View online survey responses of 18 parents were taken into account, as were parents' views given to the inspector at the beginning of the school day.
- A brief visit was made to the on-site, independently run pre-school, the imminent strategic plan for which is to join the early years of the school.

Inspection team

Ruth Brock, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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