

Aycliffe Drive Primary School

Aycliffe Drive, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 6LJ

Inspection dates

11–12 May 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Gaps and imbalances in the curriculum meant that those leaving Year 6 in the summer of 2016 achieved poorly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although the school has taken great strides forward, some gaps remain. In mathematics and science, the school is not providing pupils with the full breadth and balance of all aspects of these subjects.
- About one in five disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school. This can adversely affect their learning.
- Some teachers move pupils too quickly through basic mathematical skills. Pupils who struggle with the subject can be left uncertain about their learning.
- Pupils do not develop secure knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics and science because they do not experience the full breadth of the curriculum. As a result, they are not fully prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school has the following strengths

- The actions taken by leaders and governors, working closely with the local authority, have resulted in much-improved outcomes in reading and writing.
- Pupils achieve well in the phonics screening check near the end of Year 1.
- Pupils' behave well. They have good attitudes to learning and a strong work ethic.
- Most pupils said they feel happy, safe and well cared for in school. The vast majority of parents agreed.
- Children make a good start in the early years and are well prepared for Year 1.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils make at least good progress in mathematics and science, by ensuring that teachers:
 - plan and teach all the required aspects of mathematics and science
 - use assessment effectively to check that pupils fully understand basic mathematical skills before moving them on in their learning.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring subject leaders check that pupils experience the full breadth and balance of the national curriculum in mathematics and science
 - seeking further ways to reduce persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders did not recognise last year's decline from good quickly enough. As a result, Year 6 did not acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they needed to be well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- In mathematics and science, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn about important elements, such as statistics and algebra. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Leaders and staff are going through a 'steep learning curve'. Aycliffe Drive has a record of high achievement going back over many years. Even so, they did not recognise, nor respond quickly enough to, the decline that was happening last year.
- Reading and writing are much improved from last year. Leaders worked closely with the local authority to thoroughly analyse what went wrong, and plan the necessary changes. Beneficial improvements to what is taught, and how it is taught, are leading to better pupil achievement.
- Information about pupils' progress is analysed regularly. Good-quality training, and working with the local authority, means all leaders now have an accurate understanding of the expectations for each age group of pupils. They use this information well. Inspectors' checks confirm that assessments are accurate.
- Most, but not yet all, subject leaders check that all aspects of their subjects are covered sufficiently, and take effective action if they are not. This year, they benefit from the local authority's help and advice, for example how to spot gaps in the curriculum. Comparing the accuracy of their checks of pupils' progress with that of other schools is useful, too.
- Staff's determination to improve the curriculum is strong. Morale is high. Staff replying to their online survey said they enjoy working at the school, and feel respected.
- The management of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Each pupil's needs are assessed accurately. Funding is used effectively, largely on additional staff or particular equipment to aid learning.
- Additional pupil premium funding is largely spent effectively. The needs of these pupils is given high priority. Extra teaching is often provided. Funding is also used to ensure that these pupils experience opportunities beyond the classroom they might not otherwise have had. However, a significant proportion are regularly absent.
- Pupils and staff gain from the effective use of the additional funding for primary school sports. An apprentice works with pupils to offer energetic and enjoyable lunchtime activities. Pupils enjoy a wider range of sports, including 'tag' rugby. Pupils' understanding of the importance of energetic activity to healthy living is strong. They participate enthusiastically and enjoy competing with other local schools.
- Pupils say they enjoy the interesting topics they study. They like the wide variety of activities, and that visits or visitors enhance their learning. Extra-curricular activities extend learning, too.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. In lessons and around

the school, pupils enjoy working and playing together, and helping one another.

- Pupils' understanding of British values is good. They know that democracy gives everyone an equal voice, and this is fair. They understand 'respect'. Nine in every ten pupils responding to their online survey said the school encourages respect for others' faith and backgrounds.
- The local authority works closely with school leaders, staff and governors to bring about improvements. Staff benefit particularly from advice and guidance about curriculum content and checking pupils' understanding.
- The vast majority of parents are very positive in their support for the school. 19 in every 20 parents responding to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- The governing body draws effectively on each individual's skills, expertise and experience. As a consequence, they are largely effective.
- Governors' regular visits to the school provide an independent view and greater insight into how the school functions.
- Governors regularly receive information from school leaders about pupils' progress, to gain a clear view of how children learn. If they see inconsistencies, they question school leaders to find out why. However, last year, as the new testing arrangements were introduced, they did not use other information sufficiently well to check the accuracy of the school's information.
- The governors' response to last year's poor outcomes for Year 6 was rapid and effective. They asked, 'What do we need to do to fix it?' Together with school leaders, they worked closely with the local authority to plan the necessary changes.
- Checks made by governors ensure that additional funding, such as pupil premium, is used effectively to enable these pupils to make accelerated progress.
- Governors' oversight of the performance of staff, including the headteacher, is rigorous. Independent advice is sought and followed.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school culture is very positive. Staff are always vigilant. Any pupils' comment, for example about the use of social media, is followed up. Action is taken and investigation thorough. Where relevant, a subsequent assembly will be used to remind and reinforce how to stay safe to pupils.
- School leaders, staff and governors undertake regular training, including aspects of safeguarding and their 'Prevent' duty. All staff receive appropriate, timely updates.
- Staff said they feel they are equipped with all the knowledge and advice they need to be able to detect pupils who are potentially vulnerable.
- Staff said they are confident in raising any concerns they may have with the

designated leaders for safeguarding. Effective systems record and note any concerns.

- Relationships with outside agencies are good. Appropriate action is taken to address any concerns and seek help for vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Documentation is comprehensive. Checks on the suitability of staff, governors and regular volunteers are thorough.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' assessment and planning has not identified gaps in the mathematics curriculum. While they have done so in science, they have only recently begun to make the necessary changes. As a result, in both subjects, pupils have gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Some teachers move pupils too quickly through the fundamentals of mathematics, so their knowledge and fluency are insecure. As a result, when they apply these skills, for example to tackle problems, they are often unsure.
- Teachers' implementation of the many recent improvements, particularly in writing and reading, is effective.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. As a result, lessons run smoothly. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning contribute, too.
- Staff's accurate use of the assessment of pupils' learning in one lesson to plan the next means that work is neither too hard nor too easy.
- Pupils said their teacher's feedback was beneficial because it confirmed what they had achieved and helped them see what they still need to master. All those spoken to said they try to follow any recommendations staff give them.
- Teachers deploy teaching assistants effectively. Teaching assistants contribute greatly to pupils' learning because they are knowledgeable and skilled. They have benefited greatly from recent high-quality training.
- Staff promote pupils' speaking and listening skills well through a range of suitable activities.
- Reading is taught well. Staff seek every opportunity to enable pupils to practise their early reading skills, such as phonics. Recent improvements in the curriculum, and good training, mean staff teach more advanced skills, such as inference, more effectively.
- Teachers provide a range of homework activities that build on learning in school, practise key skills such as spelling, or prepare pupils for future lessons. Nine in every 10 parents responding to their survey said their children receive appropriate homework for their age. A slightly higher proportion said their children are taught well at Aycliffe Drive Primary.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to their survey agreed their children are happy at school. Pupils responding to their online survey were equally positive.
- Pupils' positive attitudes benefit their learning. They understand the importance of showing characteristics such as resilience. They come to school wanting to learn.
- Pupils' good awareness of their relative strengths and areas to improve enables them to play a part in the tasks they do in class. One said, 'If I think I know what to do, I go for the hardest one, but if I don't, I start with something easier.'
- Pupils welcome the opportunities to take responsibility, help others and shape the future direction of their school.
- Pupils said they feel well cared for in school. They said bullying very rarely happens. Every pupil asked agreed there is an adult in school they can talk to if something is worrying them. They said they are confident that adults will resolve any conflict.
- Pupils enjoy the outdoor learning. Typical comments included, 'I love coming to the forest area,' and 'However I'm feeling, I feel better here.' It is important to pupils' well-being. Teamwork skills, such as collaboration, develop well, too.
- Pupils understand how to stay safe when using the internet. They know, for example, not to give personal information to others. As well as regular lessons, staff diligently follow up any issues that arise.
- Right from when children carry and put away equipment, staff give regular age-appropriate reminders of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View felt the school makes sure its pupils are well behaved. Nearly every pupil responding to their survey agreed their teachers encourage them to be friendly towards other pupils.
- Pupils know the rules and generally stick to them. In lessons, pupils want to learn and contribute positively to the working atmosphere.
- Around the school, pupils' behaviour is equally positive. Whether moving around the building, or playing in the grounds, pupils treat one another kindly.
- Pupils' pride in themselves, their work and their school is strong. They take care of, and look after, equipment.
- Nearly every parents responding to their online survey agreed that their children feel safe in school. In discussion, pupils also said they feel safe. They said the security gates helped them to feel safe in school at all times, so they enjoy school more.
- Attendance overall is broadly average. The good-quality breakfast club encourages punctuality. The school offers many rewards and incentives, to houses, classes and

individuals, to encourage good attendance. Despite this, about one in every five disadvantaged pupils is absent for at least the equivalent of one day every two weeks, and some much more. This adversely affects their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, national test results showed that Year 6 pupils had not developed secure knowledge, understanding and skills in reading, writing and mathematics. They did not experience the full breadth of the curriculum. In some aspects, there was an imbalance of time spent on them. Comprehension skills in reading, and use of grammar and punctuation in writing, are two examples. As a result, they were not well prepared for the next stage in their education. This included disadvantaged pupils who did not diminish the difference between themselves and other pupils nationally. In reading and writing, this has been put right and, as a result, current pupils are achieving well.
- In mathematics and science, gaps in the taught curriculum remain. Statistics and algebra in mathematics, and raising questions and analysing results in science, are examples. In these and other areas, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to experience these aspects and build their understanding.
- From their differing starting points, the learning of roughly four in every five pupils currently in the school improves well in reading and writing. The school's checks on progress, and the quality of work in pupils' books, shows this. This is largely due to leaders' effective action to improve the curriculum and how it is taught.
- Over time, the proportion of Year 1 pupils succeeding in the phonics screening check is improving. In 2016, it was above the national average. School data and inspection evidence suggests this is also likely to be the case this year.
- Disadvantaged pupils who attend well generally do as well as their classmates. Additional funding is largely spent on extra staff. Some pupils, because of this extra help, do better still. If they do not, it is generally because these pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities that impact on academic learning, or because they are often absent and miss relatively high amounts of schooling and consequently fall behind.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make similar progress to their peers, although many from differing starting points. Again, extra help is often useful, whether to go over gaps in learning, or to give a boost before the next lesson.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, make good progress and generally achieve the higher standards. Although these pupils also have gaps in their learning, their greater confidence and ability to apply their knowledge enables them to try to figure things out for themselves.
- Pupils do well in some other subjects, too. Good leadership of physical education means the full curriculum is taught. Outdoor learning is well planned and offers pupils a wide range of activities.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join with a wide range of starting points. Most are similar to, or below, those typical of children of their age. Children do well in Nursery and Reception. The proportion of children in 2016 reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception was slightly above the national average. School information and inspection evidence suggest it is likely to be similar this year.
- Children arrive keen and eager to see what new activities are waiting for them. They settle quickly because they understand the structure of the day, and what is expected of them.
- Children concentrate well. They persevere, even with challenging tasks, sustaining effort and interest until they generally succeed. Whether choosing a snack or putting equipment away, they enjoy being responsible for themselves.
- Staff take every opportunity to develop children's understanding of key skills, such as phonics. Staff know when to intervene when a child needs some help, and when to step back and let the child try to figure it out for themselves. High-quality questions probe and extend children's thinking.
- Activities, such as a visit to the supermarket, fire children's imagination and draw them into the learning. Many activities start from the children's own interests. Inside and out, the classroom environments are rich in tasks that promote reading, writing and mathematics.
- Each child's learning is duly noted, information shared with other staff, and used to plan the next day's activities. In this way, learning builds at a good rate.
- Staff form an effective team. Each person knows what is expected of them, and what they can expect from others. They know and follow the systems and procedures they are to use, including those for safeguarding and welfare requirements.
- Leadership and management is effective. Every aspect of the provision is carefully planned to maximise children's learning opportunities.
- Parents are seen as key partners in their children's education. Parents say arrangements when their children start are good. They appreciate the guidance they are given to help support learning at home.

School details

Unique reference number	117335
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031509

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	Primary and Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Pam Gent
Headteacher	Maria Green
Telephone number	01442 404 008
Website	www.aycliffedrive.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@aycliffedrive.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The school operates two Nursery classes, one morning and one afternoon, five days a week. The two Reception classes are taught together in one large room. Years 1 and 2 are taught in three classes; one Year 1, one Year 2 and one mixed with both years. This is repeated in Years 3 to 6; Years 3 and 4 in three classes, Years 5 and 6 in three other classes.
- About seven in every 10 pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is above average.

- The overall proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- In 2016, the school did not meet the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school operates a breakfast club, five days a week.
- An independent pre-school operates onsite. It is inspected separately.
- An independent after-school care also operates on-site and is inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some visits were conducted jointly with the headteacher or the assistant headteacher. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school and site.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. An inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 67 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors considered the views of 15 members of staff and 54 pupils who completed paper copies of their surveys.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Powell	Ofsted Inspector
Nathan Lowe	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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