

Ascot Road Community Free School

Ascot Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD18 8AD

Inspection dates

20–21 June 2017

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the opening of the school, senior leaders have created a positive environment in which pupils feel valued and have confidence to achieve. Pupils make good personal and academic progress.
- Governors, under the strong leadership of the chair of governors, are well informed about the work of the school. They make a significant contribution to improving the standard of education provided.
- New middle leaders contribute well to school improvement. However, the impact of their work on accelerating the progress pupils make is not yet evaluated rigorously enough.
- Pupils' behaviour around school is exemplary. They are proud of their environment and look after it very well.
- Children start well in Reception. They are safe and well cared for in an organised and stimulating environment. They make good progress from their individual starting points.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided for effectively. Most make good progress both academically and personally.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. School leaders focus on teaching values to pupils which provide a strong moral framework that is shared by all.
- Pupils have positive relationships with adults and each other. Adults provide many additional activities at lunchtime and after school. Pupils develop their sporting skills well.
- Teaching of early reading is effective. The proportion of pupils who meet the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is consistently above the national average.
- Pupils are not as confident and accurate in their spelling as they should be.
- The quality of pupils' handwriting and presentation varies. Adults do not reinforce good habits regularly enough for younger pupils.
- Most-able pupils achieve well in mathematics. They can explain their methods easily and enjoy the many challenges that adults provide.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. Governors recognise that, as the school grows, they do not always communicate the positive changes as well as they could.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average. A few pupils do not attend school as well as they should and are persistently absent.
- The most able children in early years are not provided with sufficient opportunity to develop their writing skills further so more exceed expectations for their age.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - adults insisting on the highest quality of presentation and handwriting in pupils' work so there is consistency across the school, starting from early years
 - improving the standard of pupils' spelling in their written work.
- Continue to improve leadership and management by:
 - raising pupils' attendance so it is at least in line with the national average and reduce persistent absenteeism
 - middle leaders analysing the impact of their actions rigorously and systematically
 - ensuring that parents are fully informed about the good work of the school as it grows.
- Continue to improve the early years provision by:
 - providing more opportunities for the most able children to write and extend their skills so more exceed expectations for their age.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the school's opening in September 2014, leaders and governors have created a school with a strong, positive ethos where pupils' achievement is at the heart of all they do. Leaders are determined that every pupil succeeds. Consequently, pupils make good progress both personally and academically.
- The executive principal, ably supported by the assistant principal, has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Together they have firm and clear plans to ensure that as the school grows, the quality and capacity of school leadership also improves.
- Leaders monitor the quality of teaching, learning and assessment closely. They provide good-quality training and development for staff and new leaders, so adults can perform their roles and responsibilities effectively. Staff are proud to work at the school and comments such as, 'we are encouraged to continue with our professional development' were commonplace during the inspection.
- Leaders track the progress of every pupil regularly, carefully considering the provision for pupils if they are in danger of falling behind. A significant proportion of pupils start midway through the school year which can affect the pace at which they can make progress. The longer pupils attend Ascot Road Community Free School the quicker they progress. Pupils who have been at the school from Reception often make very good progress in their learning from their starting points.
- Pupils receive a varied programme of visits and religious education that supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Around the school, there are many displays that celebrate the different cultures and languages represented in the school. Pupils are friendly and accepting of each other and their differing views.
- Leadership for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. The recently appointed leader has a wealth of experience and provides effective practical support for pupils. Staff are increasingly adept at providing tailored activities so individual pupils can succeed and have their needs met in class. Additional funds for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are effectively allocated.
- Many middle leaders are new to their positions and enthusiastic for their roles and responsibilities. However, they have yet to fully assess the impact of their work on the progress pupils make in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- The curriculum is planned carefully and thoughtfully. The school successfully operates an extended summer term so pupils experience project work and additional opportunities across the curriculum. Pupils produce high-quality design and technology projects such as their science habitats in Year 2. Some of the work seen was part of pupils' homework, and pupils' efforts were of a particularly high quality.
- Leaders extend the school day, and provide a wealth of additional clubs and activities for pupils to enjoy. A few parents expressed concerns about changes in the way these clubs are allocated as the school grows. Governors are aware that communication with parents about this strong provision may not have been as effective as possible.

Inspectors found that the pupils are very well catered for after school and the provision is varied and exciting. Many staff give their own time to provide this wide range of activities.

- Leaders use the additional money the school receives for disadvantaged pupils thoughtfully to reduce any barriers for learning that are identified. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are provided with priority access to clubs and activities. School leaders also identify and carefully support other pupils who are vulnerable, but not eligible for additional funds. Pupils are cared for and their pastoral needs are considered well.
- Sports funding is used effectively. The additional funding has resulted in increased levels of participation in a wide range of sports both in and out of school hours.
- The multi-academy trust provides effective support and challenge to school leaders. Representatives have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and hold leaders and governors to account well. They work closely with the school to ensure that the high-quality provision for pupils improves and sustains.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective and is led by an experienced chair of governors. The governing body has an accurate view of the school's strengths and the challenges it faces as it grows each year until it reaches its full capacity as a primary school. They have a clear strategy for continuing to develop the leadership team.
- Governor minutes demonstrate that over time, governors hold school leaders to account well for the performance of pupils. They rightly ask challenging questions and are thoughtful when making decisions with leaders about the actions taken to improve the school.
- The trust board, together with governors, set the executive principal's performance targets. The executive principal is appropriately held to account for the progress pupils make.
- Governors visit the school often to check the validity of the information they are given. The safeguarding governor visits frequently to spot check the information the school holds on keeping pupils safe and well looked after. Consequently, governors are well informed about all aspects of school life.
- Governors are dedicated and want the school to succeed. They reflect on their own performance and ensure that new governors have suitable experience and skills to help move the school forward on its journey to outstanding.
- The school's website is up to date with all relevant information so that parents can access any information required.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School records for safeguarding pupils are kept in meticulous order. Staff understand their responsibilities around reporting concerns and the designated safeguarding

leaders ensure that any concerns are followed through to a satisfactory conclusion for the individual pupil.

- All required information is in place to show that leaders and governors check the suitability of any staff who work in the school. This information is rigorously checked by governors.
- Staff receive appropriate training regarding current child protection expectations and requirements. They have received their 'Prevent' duty training. The designated safeguarding lead makes sure that staff are kept up to date with any changes to statutory requirements.
- There are posters around the school explaining how pupils can keep safe online. Pupils generally understand that they do not give their name when using the internet. However, some are not able to explain sufficiently well how to keep themselves safe online, in an age-appropriate way.
- All parents who responded to their online questionnaire agreed that their children are safe and well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is of a consistently high standard for most pupils to make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations are high enough in key stage 1 for pupils in Year 2 to make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers' positive relationships with pupils ensure that little learning time is lost in lessons. Adults know pupils well and this means that teachers are well placed to meet pupils' learning needs and develop pupils' positive attitudes. This is particularly the case in Year 2 where pupils respond exceptionally well to adults' direction and are highly motivated to learn.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support pupils' learning in class and in additional lessons on a one-to-one basis. They use questioning skills well to develop pupils' language and responses. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making strong progress in their learning.
- Pupils' mathematics books show that teachers provide different levels of challenge for pupils to complete in lessons. The most able pupils relish the opportunity to demonstrate their numerical skills and explain their methods. This is particularly the case in Year 2, where pupils are very skilled at their mathematical reasoning.
- The teaching of early reading is a strength and pupils achieve well in their Year 1 phonics screening check. However, adults do not routinely reinforce the link between learning sounds and spelling unfamiliar words as well as they could. Pupils' spelling in their written work is not as well developed and pupils do not use their knowledge of their sounds well enough when writing unfamiliar words.
- Adults' expectation of pupils' achievement in other subjects is not as high as in English and mathematics. This results in most-able pupils not receiving sufficient opportunity to extend, explore and investigate as fully as possible. Pupils told inspectors that they did not have enough geography lessons. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that

this is the case.

- The teaching of handwriting is less secure. Some pupils develop poor habits of letter formation and handwriting style and this goes unchecked. Adults do not consistently insist on pupils' best work and the quality of presentation varies.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are well cared for and make good personal progress. There is a strong sense of community. Staff work well together to create a welcoming environment in which pupils are happy and feel safe.
- Pupils can identify who they would speak with if they were concerned or worried. Those spoken with during the inspection were highly confident that an adult would help and sort a situation effectively.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have their needs thoughtfully met. They are provided with ample opportunities to develop their independent learning skills as well as times to work with an adult.
- Pupils are provided with a wide range of additional clubs and physical activities so they learn to keep themselves healthy. At lunchtimes, a large proportion of pupils play team games, where they demonstrate skills well beyond their age.
- Although leaders promote good attendance at school, it remains below the national average. Currently, leaders do not strategically analyse the attendance of significant groups such as disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities as rigorously as they could. Consequently, the persistent absence for these groups of pupils remains higher than the national average.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' conduct is exemplary. They are very sensible as they walk around the school. Those who are school council representatives take their responsibilities seriously and perform their roles exceptionally well. Other pupils respond kindly and appropriately when a representative reminds them to walk along the corridors.
- Pupils listen exceptionally well in class and respond promptly to requests from adults. Consequently, lessons proceed without interruption and pupils carry out their learning with enthusiasm, enjoying the many challenges and activities they receive.
- Adults provide a wide range of activities at lunchtime, such as basketball, football and organised games as well as quieter more reflective opportunities to sit and read. As a result, pupils behave exceptionally well during these less structured times. Friendships and good humour are highly evident.
- In assembly, when asked to reflect on how they could be courageous, pupils immediately responded, and were silent as they maturely thought about the question.

Often pupils behave in a way that is beyond their years.

- A feature of the school is the number of pupils who start mid-year. These pupils settle quickly and well into routines and the high expectations of behaviour. They are very well looked after by adults and pupils alike.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils achieve well over time. Those who have been at the school from the start of Reception demonstrate that they make good progress year on year and are working at a standard that is at least expected for their age. Pupils that start mid-year make strong and often rapid progress from their starting points.
- Pupils read confidently. Results in the Year 1 phonics screening check shows that the proportion of pupils who reach the required standard is consistently above the national average. This looks likely to continue again this year. Most pupils in Year 2 who have retaken the check this academic year are set to pass.
- This is the first year that the school has Year 2 information about how well pupils are achieving. Work in pupils' books demonstrates that many are working at least at age-related expectations and a significant number are working at greater depth, particularly in mathematics. These pupils are well prepared for key stage 2.
- School information demonstrates that many disadvantaged pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics across key stage 1. Evidence from pupils' books demonstrates that a few disadvantaged pupils are already working at greater depth in some subjects. There are a few pupils who are persistently absent and this affects the sustained progress they can make.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because adults ensure that these pupils receive increasingly precise support.
- A large proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. These pupils make rapid gains in their learning and their progress is carefully tracked and monitored. Consequently, most make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Around the school, there is a wealth of evidence to show that pupils are making good progress in other subjects such as science and design technology. Pupils enjoy learning about other people in history and make good progress in their Spanish lessons.

Early years provision

Good

- Children start Reception with individual skills and abilities that are generally typical for their age. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of children who left achieving a good level of development was above the national average and represented good progress for these children. Standards remain high and children are well prepared for Year 1.
- The recently appointed early years leader has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement in Reception. She ensures that adults work well together and that the quality of teaching across all three classes is at least good.

- Children learn in a stimulating and well organised environment. Adults plan activities that spark children's interest and enthusiasm. Consequently, children are motivated to learn and persevere with tasks. Adults use questioning skills well to develop children's speaking and listening skills.
- The outdoor area has been reorganised this year and adults provide a wealth of good-quality activities for children to develop their physical skills. Due to a lack of large outdoor cover, this space is not as frequently used as adults and children would like. Nevertheless, when children are outside they make the most of all that is available. They enjoy learning with each other developing skills such as planting flowers, running races, planning imaginary games and counting glass gems in the water tray. Adults use all opportunities to accelerate the progress children make.
- Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for, particularly in mathematics. Their workbooks show that these children are provided with the practical resources they need so they develop their understanding of how numbers work. These children are making good progress from their starting points.
- Children behave exceptionally well. They enjoy good friendships and get along well together and with the new adults in their class. They are very articulate and enjoy explaining their learning.
- Children follow adults' high expectations willingly and perform their roles and responsibilities for tidying away resources sensibly and well. Lessons proceed easily and without disruption.
- The small numbers of disadvantaged children are well provided for. Additional funds are allocated to children in Reception to ensure that they have the very best start. Leaders carefully monitor the progress of all groups of children so that any child in danger of falling behind can receive additional support and help.
- Adults provide effectively for children's health and safety. For example, every child is provided with a school hat for wearing in the sunshine so that each child has some protection.
- Children enjoy their writing and want to achieve well. However, the most able children are not provided with enough opportunities to exceed the expectations of their age so they can reach the standards of which these children are most capable.

School details

Unique reference number	140956
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031331

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	David Gelernter
Executive Principal	Helen Lockham
Telephone number	01923 801559
Website	www.ascotroadcfs.org.uk/
Email address	office@ascotroadcfs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The school is part of the West Herts Community Free School Trust.
- The school opened in 2014 and currently educates pupils to Year 2. Each academic year another year group will be added, until the school becomes a full primary school by 2020.
- The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is much higher than the national average. Currently, over 60% of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and are believed to speak another language as well as English.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower

than that found nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is lower than the national average.
- The executive principal also leads another school within the multi-academy trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally and informally. They scrutinised pupils' workbooks from a wide range of subjects, to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that groups of pupils make over time.
- The teaching of phonics was observed and a number of pupils from Year 1 read to an inspector.
- Meetings were held with the executive principal, subject leaders, and the chair of the governing body together with other members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with representatives from the multi-academy trust.
- Inspectors examined a range of documentation around child protection and scrutinised the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff.
- Parental views were considered from the 52 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire together with comments provided on the free-text service. A telephone call received after the inspection was also taken into account.
- The views of 11 staff were evaluated from their responses to the online questionnaire.
- The views of eight pupils were analysed from responses to the online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Kim Hall, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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