

Air Balloon Hill Primary School

Hillside Road, St George, Bristol, Bristol BS5 7PB

Inspection dates

18–19 April 2018

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher, who is very well supported by his senior and middle leaders, provides ambitious and determined leadership. This is characterised by the school's motto, which encourages all pupils to 'look to the stars'.
- Governors know the school very well. They use their wide range of skills to challenge leaders effectively.
- Overall, current pupils are making good progress. A new system, introduced to monitor pupils' progress, is effectively highlighting those individuals or groups that need extra support.
- Although teaching and learning are good overall, leaders are fully aware that very small pockets of inconsistency remain.
- Current pupils' work shows that their progress is improving. This is particularly so in reading and writing and across a range of other subjects, such as art, history and geography.
- Leaders recognise that the mathematics scheme does not provide enough opportunities for pupils, especially the most able, to apply their knowledge to solving problems.
- Children get off to a good start in the early years. They grow in confidence and make good progress.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are taught a broad and balanced curriculum. The school's work to promote British values and to enhance their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are polite and show respect for others. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Pupils feel safe and well cared for in school. They are confident that adults will listen to their concerns and act upon them quickly.
- The outcomes of disadvantaged pupils show only marginal gains despite the school making good use of additional funding. This is because there is not always strong engagement with the families of those pupils entitled to this funding.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average. However, a small group of pupils are persistently absent from school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in order to improve pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers give pupils sufficient opportunities to deepen their skills in mathematics and apply their knowledge and understanding to solving problems
 - staff share best practice across the school to develop further a consistent quality in all classes and phases.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing ways to engage disadvantaged families to help them have greater involvement in supporting the progress that their children make
 - ensuring that the attendance of those pupils who are persistently absent continues to improve so that it is line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Respecting the school's long-standing partnership and traditions within the community it serves, the new headteacher is sensitively bringing a fresh approach and renewed sense of direction. He is a skilful and effective delegator in this very large school and is extremely well supported by his enthusiastic and dedicated senior leadership team.
- Leaders, including governors, have an honest and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have detailed plans to make it even better. The school's improvement in standards over the past four terms demonstrates the effectiveness of leaders' actions.
- The introduction of a new, rigorous system, which monitors and evaluates pupils' learning, is having a positive impact on accelerating their progress. Teachers check the progress of different groups of pupils and are alerted to any individual or year group falling behind or needing support. They then take rapid action to get pupils back on track.
- Subject and phase leaders, ably supported by their senior colleagues, conduct regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning. This is done in a variety of ways, such as formal lesson observations, learning walks and scrutiny of pupils' work. Any actions set are quickly followed up.
- Performance management has a high profile in developing the effectiveness of staff and plays a key role in school improvement. Teachers work in partnership with leaders to identify their own strengths and the areas of practice they need to improve to ensure that their pupils achieve the highest possible outcomes. They have access to high-quality training, coaching and mentoring support. This is having a positive impact on the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment in all year groups. However, senior leaders are fully aware of the very small pockets of remaining inconsistencies in teaching and learning and are systematically addressing these.
- Leaders ensure that the pupil premium funding is used to benefit disadvantaged pupils. Specific interventions support learning and enable this group of pupils to participate in a wide range of opportunities in and out of school. During this academic year these pupils have made progress. However, leaders recognise that they need to work more closely with pupils' families in order to accelerate this progress.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities effectively ensures that their needs are met. Funding for these pupils is used well. These pupils receive skilled, specifically tailored support, such as speech and language therapy and emotional and behavioural support.
- Leaders use the sport premium effectively to improve teachers' skills and provide specialist teaching. The school also provides many extra-curricular clubs which promote pupils' health and fitness.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well. A wide range of exciting activities and extra-curricular opportunities are provided to enrich the curriculum and motivate pupils. Pupils' learning is enhanced by visitors coming into

school, special event days, and trips to local places of interest.

- The school is justifiably proud of its work to promote British values. Pupils are encouraged to think carefully about equality and diversity. They develop an understanding of democracy through a range of activities, including the election of school councillors. Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths and celebrate religious festival, such as Eid, Diwali and Chinese New Year. Parents and carers praise the school, saying, for example, 'The cultural mix and everyone is valued; the atmosphere is rich and buzzing.'
- All members of staff who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire said that they are proud to work at the school.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as many of the parents who spoke to inspectors, were highly supportive of the school. One parent summed up the views of the majority by explaining that 'the school is very well managed, especially considering the size. The staff genuinely act in the interest of the children and are constantly trying to improve their experience...for such a big school they do not forget the individual child and cater for all.'

Governance of the school

- Governors bring with them a good range of professional experience and expertise which they use effectively to support and challenge leaders.
- They have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and areas which need further improvement. This is because governors receive detailed information from the headteacher and other leaders about pupils' progress. They also visit the school regularly to find out for themselves about the quality of teaching and learning. This enables them to ask probing questions about how well pupils are doing.
- Governors maintain a very strong strategic overview of the school. They deploy staffing and resources effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding at Air Balloon Hill. The school provides a safe and caring environment for pupils. Leaders have put measures into place to ensure that all pupils stay safe.
- Leaders ensure that staff have received up-to-date safeguarding and 'Prevent' duty training. Members of staff are aware of the safeguarding procedures employed in the school. Records are well maintained. Governors effectively fulfil their safeguarding responsibilities.
- All statutory checks are in place to ensure the suitability of adults working in school. The site is secure and staff make appropriate checks on visitors when they arrive at the school.
- Pupils spoken with during the inspection said that they felt safe, and this view was

shared by parents and carers who responded to the online inspection questionnaire.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is typically characterised by strong subject knowledge, clear expectations and the planning of interesting activities that develop pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- All teaching staff have positive relationships with pupils and create an environment in which pupils are keen to learn.
- Teachers help pupils develop a love of learning in a range of different subject areas. They plan exciting topic themes which encourage pupils to explore questions such as 'Were Vikings Villains?' or 'Why do polar bears not live in Australia?' New themes are launched by special events or trips which instantly grip the pupils' interest. For example, staff make good use of local museums and places of interest to ignite pupils' imagination in topics such as 'Space' and 'World War Two'.
- The majority of teachers plan work that is matched well to pupils' different needs and abilities. Leaders and teachers ensure that assessments of pupils' learning are moderated consistently across the year groups. Teachers follow the school's marking policy consistently. Pupils confidently use a 'toolkit', which outlines what they need to consider when completing their work, to help them understand what they need to do.
- The teaching of phonics helps pupils to get off to a good start in reading. Pupils use their phonic skills well to decode unknown words. The recent improved focus on developing reading for pleasure and using shared high-quality texts as a discussion point is increasing their skills and promoting their confidence.
- Writing is taught well. Pupils have many opportunities to write for a purpose and in subjects other than English. Pupils' written work is celebrated extensively in displays around the school.
- Mathematics is taught systematically through the school using an agreed programme of study. Teaching builds on what pupils already know and can do. However, leaders recognise that pupils, particularly the most able, are not always stretched enough because there are insufficient opportunities for them to apply their knowledge to solve different types of mathematical problem.
- Leaders are fully aware that best practice needs to be shared across the school to ensure that all staff have the highest expectations for the pupils they teach.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide effective support to meet pupils' needs. Teachers ensure that teaching assistants are clear on how they should support pupils' learning. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' good progress. For example, effective use is made of the teaching assistants to help those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They are also used well in the Reception classes to help develop children's language.
- Weekly homework tasks help pupils to consolidate what they are currently learning. Research activities are also set for homework, which give parents opportunities to take part in their children's learning.
- The majority of parents who responded to the online inspection questionnaire were full of praise for the teachers. As one parent summed up, 'Teachers and staff are open and

approachable, listen to concerns and feedback, making changes where appropriate.'

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors, both formally and informally, demonstrated a good understanding of keeping safe and healthy. Pupils are very clear about the dangers of making friends using the internet.
- Pupils demonstrate tolerance towards people who have different cultures and beliefs to their own. Teachers ensure that pupils' horizons are broadened through a range of trips and visits beyond their local environment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is rooted in the daily experiences planned for them. Through assemblies, lessons and leadership opportunities, pupils learn to care for others and understand the importance of empathy.
- Pupils who join the school part way through their primary education are helped to settle in quickly.
- Leaders and staff carefully help pupils develop resilience and independence. Activities such as rafting encourage pupils to work together in partnership, to tackle challenges and to enjoy new experiences. This prepares them well for their next stage of education.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are adamant that any type of anti-social behaviour is rare, but if they have any concerns there are adults to whom they can turn to for help and advice.
- Most of the time the majority of pupils behave well. They listen attentively, work productively and they are actively engaged in a range of activities. Pupils take pride in their work and this is reflected in their books. Staff are effective at supporting individual pupils whose behaviour is difficult and work closely with outside agencies to provide specialist support.
- Attendance has improved and is similar to the national average for primary schools. Leaders use a wide range of rewards effectively to celebrate the good attendance of individual pupils. The pupil premium funding supports eligible pupils to attend the breakfast club. Leaders closely monitor pupils who are persistently absent from school. Work with some families has had a positive impact for some pupils. However, the rate of persistent absence for a small group of families remains a continuous focus for leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children start Reception with a range of different pre-school experiences. A small proportion of them have a well-developed vocabulary, are confident and quickly pick up basic reading, writing and number skills. However, an increasing proportion of children start school with limited speaking skills. They have had minimal opportunities to enjoy books, experience working with numbers or to develop the coordination skills they need to use when writing. All children make good progress in relation to their starting points. The proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is consistently average and they are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- Year 1 pupils make consistently good progress in phonics. This is reflected not only in the results of the phonics screening checks over the past three years, but also in the current pupils' confidence to link sounds to letters to work out unknown words.
- Outcomes in the 2017 Year 2 national tests were disappointing, with a below-average proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard for their age in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders know that progress of some pupils in this cohort was affected negatively by inconsistencies in teaching. In addition to this, a significant proportion of pupils, who either had poorly developed skills or special educational needs, joined the cohort midway through the academic year. Their limited progress, as highlighted in the published results, cannot be solely attributed to this school. The progress of this cohort in Year 3 is being steadily accelerated by extra support for those pupils who did not meet the expected standard at the end of key stage 1.
- Work in the current Year 2 books and the school's tracking and monitoring information show that pupils are maintaining the good progress that they made during Year 1 across all subject areas. Their books show that there is an improving trend in pupils' outcomes in Year 2.
- Although there was an improvement in Year 6 national test results in 2017 from 2016, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard for their age was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Those pupils who had been at Air Balloon since Reception gained an above-average result in reading, writing and mathematics. However, a significant proportion of this cohort joined midway through their primary education. A significant proportion of these pupils had poorly developed skills or specific special educational needs. Nevertheless, leaders recognised that those individuals identified as middle-attaining pupils at the end of Year 2 did not make the progress they were capable of.
- This year leaders have put into place a number of strategies to ensure that this lack of progress is not repeated. Current work in the books of Year 6 pupils, together with the school tracking and monitoring information, shows that the majority are working at the expected standard for their age. Those pupils who still have gaps in their learning are making gains in their progress as a result of the intensive support they are receiving.
- Work in pupils' books and on display shows that pupils are also making strong gains in subjects such as science, history, geography and art.
- The needs of the most able pupils are generally well met. For example, in phonics pupils are provided with activities that make them think deeper and harder. However, leaders recognise the need to adapt the current programme for teaching mathematics as it does not always fully stretch the most able mathematicians.
- The school is justifiably proud of the progress made by those pupils who are in the

care of the local authority. Approaches are tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils. The close partnerships between key staff, the families who take care of these children and the specialist outside agencies ensure that their progress is carefully monitored and regularly reviewed.

- Nevertheless, leaders are fully aware that not all disadvantaged pupils make the progress they are capable of. Not all of them are making sufficient gains to close the gap between them and their peers. Given that a significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils join the school midway through their primary education, leaders recognise the need to work more closely with their families.

Early years provision

Good

- The bright and exciting learning environments of the four Reception classrooms encourage children to be inquisitive and interested in their learning. They eagerly cooperate with each and show good levels of concentration. This is because teaching staff take every opportunity to engage children in exciting activities that support their learning. They plan enjoyable and engaging activities in well-resourced classrooms and outdoors.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and based strongly on children's interests and extending their experiences. In particular, staff effectively plan activities which develop the children's imagination. Children choose areas and equipment to use and they work well with others to extend their imagination.
- Teaching staff are skilled in teaching phonics and children quickly develop confidence in reading. Children use their phonics knowledge well to develop their early writing skills. Teachers plan engaging activities to make sure that children enjoy writing and for a range of different purposes. For example, children use their writing skills with confidence to describe the superhero powers they would like to have. However, leaders recognise that more could be done to promote reading and writing activities in the outdoor area.
- Teaching staff question children skilfully to help them develop understanding, to encourage them to think about what they are doing and to talk about their ideas.
- The leadership of early years is strong. Staff make sure that they note children's progress regularly and ensure that milestones are recorded. They use information about children's learning to plan challenging activities which develop a range of skills across the different areas of learning.
- Leaders make sure that they meet all statutory welfare requirements and that staff adhere strictly to the school's safeguarding practices and procedures. Leaders provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment that allows children to thrive.
- There are strong links with parents and staff involve them in their children's learning. 'Stay and play' sessions prior to starting school help children to settle in well to school.
- Workshops for parents help them to know how to support their children in developing skills in reading, writing and number.

School details

Unique reference number	135867
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	10047845

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	804
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Joseph Glidden
Headteacher	Tim Browse
Telephone number	01179 030077
Website	www.abhps.com
Email address	airballoonhillp@bristol-schools.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 January 2016

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up his post in September 2017.
- The school is much bigger than the average-sized primary school. There are four classes per year group.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club.
- The proportion of pupils joining the school midway through their primary education is high.
- Two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is average. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in every class, and in a range of different subjects, jointly with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with subject and phase leaders.
- The lead inspector met with representatives of the governing body.
- Inspectors talked with pupils formally and informally in and around the school. They observed pupils during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors listened to a number of pupils from different age groups read.
- Inspectors checked a range of pupils' books jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and took account of 109 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire.
- Inspectors took account of 24 responses from the inspection questionnaire for school staff.
- Inspectors scrutinised a variety of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, school policies and procedures, and the school's own assessment information. A range of documentation regarding safeguarding was scrutinised.

Inspection team

Lorna Brackstone, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Marion Borland	Ofsted Inspector
Martin Bragg	Ofsted Inspector
Nicola Berry	Ofsted Inspector

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