

Ashdown Primary School

Luxford Road, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2HW

Inspection dates

1–2 May 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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The dynamic executive headteacher has a clear vision for the school. She is well supported by a conscientious senior leadership team. Staff are united in upholding the school's aims. After a period of staffing turbulence, the school is now on a strong footing to improve even further.
- Governors are well able to support and challenge the school. They have an in-depth understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children make strong progress from their starting points. A higher proportion than found nationally reach a good level of development. Children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Parents hold the school in high regard, as they say that their children receive a good quality of education. Almost all would recommend the school to another parent.
- Pupils make strong progress. In 2017 they achieved above the national average in both key stage 1 and key stage 2.
- The quality of teaching is good. It is well planned and builds on pupils' prior learning. Assessment systems have recently changed. Staff are now accurate in assessing where pupils are in their learning. Teachers are focused on meeting pupils' next step in learning.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved. The school supports pupils' personal development well. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong.
- The curriculum is vibrant and engaging. Pupils enjoy many experiences in art, sports and history and drama.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations for most able pupils. They do not provide them with enough challenging work.
- Middle leaders do not make full use of school performance information to ensure that pupils make the best possible progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise teachers' expectations to ensure that they provide greater challenge for those pupils who are most able.
- Ensure that middle leaders make more effective use of school performance information so that all pupils make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The executive headteacher has demonstrated remarkable leadership. She has ensured that the two schools, Whitehill Infant and Herne Junior, amalgamated successfully. Together with her senior leadership team, she has improved both the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Leaders have managed to stabilise staffing following the period of turbulence last year. However, they recognise that in some year groups, especially the current Year 5, there was a negative impact on pupils' progress. Current staff who spoke to inspectors or who responded to the Ofsted survey were very complimentary about the support provided by senior leaders. New staff said that the induction process was effective. Plans for the continuing professional development of staff are comprehensive. Staff share the high aspirations and goals of the senior leadership team.
- Additional funding, such as for pupil premium, is well spent so that standards improve for eligible pupils. Sports funding is used effectively to ensure that a greater number of pupils take part and do well in the activities provided. For example, pupils achieve success in football and netball tournaments. All pupils make good use of the school's own swimming pool. When asked, pupils said that they now feel more confident in the water. Many are developing strong swimming skills.
- The curriculum is well planned. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed through a variety of subjects, such as information technology and geography. Pupils say that they like the way that topics are introduced with a 'stunning start'. For example, during the inspection pupils in Year 5 spent a day learning about life in Roman Britain. They tried on costumes and looked at the different implements for making food. Extra-curricular activities are effective, they broaden the range of subjects that pupils experience.
- Leaders foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in assembly pupils consider the major celebrations of world religions. The school instils in pupils a strong awareness about protecting the environment. Pupils in the 'green team' encourage others to become aware of the need to recycle. At breaktimes pupils in key stage 1 put their fruit skins into a compost bin. The resulting compost is then used to plant seeds.
- Many middle leaders are new in post. Currently, they do not make enough use of school performance information to ensure that pupils are making the best possible progress in their areas of responsibility.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. They have a clear strategic overview of all aspects of the school. They share the leadership's team vision to continue to improve.
- Governors have a wide range of expertise. They use their skills in education, finance, law and business to good effect. As a result, they are able to hold the school to

account well.

- Some governors were members of the governing bodies of the previous schools. They recognise how much stronger governance is now than before. Minutes show that governors are very rigorous in analysing data. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils understand about different safeguarding issues that can affect them, both at home and at school. For example, they know how to stay safe when using the internet. Pupils are alert to possible dangers, knowing sometimes that adults on the internet pretend to be children. Parents consider that their children are safe at the school.
- The culture of safeguarding is strong. Training for staff is thorough. They know how to identify pupils who are potentially at risk. Safeguarding concerns are carefully recorded.
- The designated safeguarding leads fulfil their roles diligently. All the required checks are completed before new staff take up their roles.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. Teaching is now consistently good across the school. Strong relationships between pupils and staff are clear. This helps pupils to feel confident enough to try out new or different activities.
- Teachers question pupils skilfully. They ensure that pupils think deeply and give a clear rationale when answering questions. This helps teachers to address any misconceptions quickly.
- The teaching of reading is strong. From the Reception class pupils develop a love of books. From key stage 1 pupils start to write reviews of the books they have read. Most pupils are able to talk confidently about the type of books that they like to read. Some pupils relish the opportunity to read stories to the school reading dog.
- Writing is well taught. Pupils learn to apply their grammar and punctuation skills well. Books show that pupils often draft and redraft their work. As one pupil said, 'I like to make sure my stories have lots of description and so I go back and improve things.' Around the school there are many displays of pupils' high-quality writing. These include some imaginative poems about the planets that Year 5 pupils had written.
- Teaching in mathematics has steadily improved pupils' skills in problem-solving and reasoning. In all classes teachers encourage pupils to use mathematical language when explaining their answers.
- History and geography skills are well developed. For example, pupils understand that they live in an area rich in history and designated as having outstanding natural beauty. Pupils are taught to respect the environment and nature. They use their

mapping skills effectively to plot routes around the High Weald.

- Senior leaders have developed a new assessment system. It accurately shows those pupils who are at or below age-related expectations. Pupils' progress is also carefully tracked. As a consequence, senior leaders are well informed how pupils are doing in the school. Any pupil who is falling behind, or who finds learning more challenging, is well supported by teachers and learning support assistants.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school succeeds in its aims of developing the confidence, independence and self-esteem of pupils. In lessons pupils are self-assured learners. They take pride in their work and know what they need to do to make good progress. Pupils talked about how they had improved their literacy and numeracy skills when they showed their books to the inspectors.
- Parents are complimentary about how well the school supports children's personal development. One expressed the views of many when they said, 'My child has flourished, staff make sure he is well cared for and he knows he is valued.'
- Pupils have a good understanding about the different types of bullying. They say that incidents of bullying are rare, but if they had any concerns they would talk to a trusted member of staff.
- Pupils know how to stay safe, such as when crossing the road or travelling by train. They understand that as they grow up they have to take more responsibility to keep themselves safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils respect and understand the need for rules. They enjoy the rewards the school provides for good behaviour, such as 'Hot Chocolate Fridays'. Pupils consider that the school is fair in its approach to dealing with any behaviour that is not so good.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to what the teacher has to say. They are courteous and friendly towards each other. During the inspection Year 5 pupils behaved exceptionally well during their Roman workshop day. They took great care of all the resources.
- School records show that there are few recorded incidents of poor behaviour, either in lessons or around the school.
- Attendance at the school is in line with the national average. It is steadily improving and to date there are fewer absences this year than at the same time last year.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for pupils are good. Inspection evidence, including the school's own assessment information, and work in books indicates that pupils are making good progress in a range of subjects.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national phonics screening check was above average in 2017. Pupils make a good start to understanding the sounds that letters make. They apply their strong phonic awareness to spell words correctly. Older pupils were able to talk about why they enjoy reading particular authors.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in writing, mathematics and science was above the national average. In reading, it was similar to the national average. Current pupils are on track to make continued good progress.
- Pupils' progress was similar to the national average in 2017. This represented a considerable improvement from the previous year. Stronger progress was due to improvements in the quality of teaching. This resulted in a greater proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard, when compared to the national average.
- In 2017, disadvantaged pupils attained a little lower than the national average. Current school information and work in books shows that many are making accelerated progress to catch up.
- Pupils who are currently in Year 4 have made good progress from their low starting points when they entered key stage 2. Many are catching up well so they are approaching the standard expected for their age.
- Progress in Year 5 last year suffered because of the large staff turnover. Staffing is now more stable. Evidence in books and the school's own records show that pupils are now making stronger progress. Many have caught up to the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are given helpful support to overcome their barriers to learning. Their needs are quickly identified by staff and they often make good progress from their starting points.
- Across the school most-able pupils do not always make strong progress. This is because teachers do not yet have high enough expectations for them. Teachers do not always provide work that fully challenges most-able pupils.

Early years provision

Good

- Children quickly settle into the early years due to the friendly environment. There are good relationships between children and the staff. Children are clearly happy and content.
- Parents are full of praise for the way that staff support their child's personal development. One said, 'I cannot praise enough the high standard of care and learning that my child has received to date.'

- Children enter the early years with skills and abilities that are below average. They make strong progress, and the percentage of children reaching a good level of development is above the national average. Current children continue to make good progress. They are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Teachers plan stimulating activities that enable children to develop their curiosity. Trips and visits, such as to a local farm, inspire children and help them to understand more about the world around them. The exciting environment provides many opportunities for pupils to develop in all the areas of learning.
- Staff instil in children a love of nature and the environment. For example, children found the activities of worms and tadpoles fascinating. The school's wildlife area is frequently visited for forest school. Children learn that plants need heat, light and water to grow. During the inspection children proudly showed the inspectors the seeds that they had recently planted.
- Early reading and writing skills are well developed because phonics is well taught. Children learn the sounds of letters, they begin to blend letters together to make words. Children have ample opportunities to develop their reading skills. Staff value the generous support given by parents who form the 'reading army'. They come into school on a regular basis and listen to children read.
- Children behave well. When playing together they share resources and wait sensibly for their turn. Children enjoy exploring the activities that are provided.
- Leadership is strong. Documentation shows a determination to continue to improve. Adults track children's learning carefully and so are able to provide opportunities that meet their needs well.

School details

Unique reference number	114392
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10046469

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Allen
Executive Headteacher	Kate Owbridge
Telephone number	01892 655846
Website	www.ashdown.e-sussex.sch.uk
Email address	office@ashdown.e-sussex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Ashdown Primary School is larger than average-sized primary school.
- A smaller proportion of pupils, when compared to the national average, are eligible for the pupil premium.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In September 2015 Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School amalgamated to form Ashdown Primary School. The schools were last inspected by Ofsted in 2013, when Whitehill Infant School was judged to be good and Herne Junior School was judged to require improvement. The school is based on two sites. The infant site is

situated at Luxford Road and the junior site is at Herne Road.

- The school is led by an executive headteacher, who was appointed in September 2015. Each site is managed by a head of school.
- The school has been through a significant period of staffing turbulence. A third of the staff are new this academic year.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes. They talked to pupils about their work and looked in their books. Some pupils in Years 2 and 6 read to inspectors. Meetings were held with pupils to ascertain their views of the school. Four responses to the Ofsted pupil questionnaire were considered.
- Inspectors met the executive headteacher and heads of school. There were discussions with other staff with key leadership responsibilities and with some members of the governing body. There were telephone conversations with the chair of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including the school's own check on its performance and the quality of teaching, the school improvement plan, information on pupils' progress and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors had informal discussions with parents at the end of the school day. The views of 130 parents who had responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were considered. Staff views were gathered through meetings and the 21 responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lesley Fisher-Pink	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Yates	Ofsted Inspector

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