

Aston Clinton School

Twitchell Lane, Aston Clinton, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP22 5JJ

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- While leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school, their plans for improvement are not precise enough.
- Leaders are not checking the impact of their work robustly enough, including the impact of additional funding or the quality of teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- Governors are passionate and committed to their roles. They are not, however, holding leaders to account with sufficient rigour.
- While there are some strengths in teaching, across the school the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is too variable.
- Assessment is not used consistently to ensure that the work set for pupils is sufficiently challenging.
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to use and apply their skills in both mathematics and writing.
- Across the school, too many pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable in mathematics, writing and spelling. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged.
- At times, some pupils lose interest in their learning and become distracted. The presentation of pupils' work is not consistently high.
- The early years provision requires improvement. At times, activities do not meet children's learning needs. Furthermore, some adults do not make effective use of questioning to deepen children's understanding.

The school has the following strengths

- Leadership of the additionally resourced provision (ARP) is highly effective. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported and, as a result, they make strong progress.
- Leaders ensure that safeguarding has a high priority. As a result, pupils are well looked after and kept safe from harm.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their understanding of British values is strong. Pupils are very respectful of the beliefs and opinions of others.
- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils feel safe and are well supported in school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that plans to improve teaching and learning are precise and have measurable targets
 - sharpening leaders' monitoring so that it focuses on the impact of their actions, including the impact of their use of additional funding
 - developing the effectiveness of the governing body in holding leaders to account for the outcomes of pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make at least good progress, by:
 - ensuring that pupils are given the opportunity to draft, edit and improve their writing
 - improving the teaching of spelling so that pupils are equipped with effective spelling strategies
 - ensuring that pupils have regular opportunities to use and apply their skills to solve problems and reason in mathematics
 - ensuring that pupils take pride in their work and present it neatly.
- Improve the accuracy of assessment so that teachers, including those in early years, plan learning for pupils that is challenging and enables them to make at least good progress.
- Improve the effectiveness of the early years provision, by developing the quality of adults' questioning, so adults are more effective in deepening children's understanding and skills.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in standards across the school. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are committed to addressing the priorities for improvement in order to improve teaching and learning and raise standards.
- While leaders have put in place some strategies to tackle the decline in standards, their plans for school improvement are not precise enough and targets are not measurable. Consequently, leaders have not had enough impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning also lacks focus. Leaders have not given enough consideration to the impact of their initiatives on pupils' outcomes. Where new strategies have been introduced, they are not embedded or applied consistently throughout the school. This has resulted in too much variability in the quality of teaching and learning.
- The leadership of SEND, including the additionally resourced provision (ARP), is strong. Support plans for pupils with SEND are highly effective. They are succinctly written and sharply focused to ensure that pupils' needs are met through appropriate support and interventions. Leaders routinely check the impact that these plans have on pupils' progress. As a result, pupils with SEND are making strong progress from their starting points.
- While leaders have used pupil premium funding to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are provided with additional support, they have not monitored the effect of this spending carefully enough. As a result, while disadvantaged pupils are currently making progress in line with that of their peers, they are not making the progress they need to in order to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils are taught a diverse curriculum, although the quality of teaching in some subjects is variable. Pupils develop key skills in a wide range of subjects, particularly in art and religious education. A variety of planned visits and visitors enrich pupils' experience. For example, during the inspection, pupils visited the O2 Arena to perform in the Young Voices concert. These opportunities are valued by pupils and parents and carers. As one parent said, 'The curriculum is varied and concerns the whole child, including valuable days with parent involvement, performances, traditions, outings, crafts and sports.'
- Leaders ensure that parents have regular opportunities to become involved in their children's learning. For example, adults are welcomed into school to take part in a range of activities alongside the pupils on 'FUDGE' days (Friends, Uncles, Dads, Grandads, Everyone). These are extremely popular with parents.
- Leaders make use of the physical education and sport premium to provide pupils with the opportunity to take part in a wide range of sporting activities, including participating in competitive tournaments and competitions. They do not, however, monitor with enough rigour the impact of the spending on pupils' attainment.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and

their understanding of British values is effective. The school is a highly inclusive environment where people's differences are celebrated and respected. Pupils demonstrate a genuine interest in learning about other religions and cultures and are respectful of other people's opinions and beliefs.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are committed to the school and are passionate about their roles. They want the best for all pupils in the school.
- However, because leaders' plans for improvement are not focused enough and actions are not measurable, governors are not monitoring the impact of leaders' work with sufficient rigour. Minutes of the governing body's meetings show that, while they ask questions of school leaders, governors do not challenge them robustly enough about the outcomes for pupils.
- Similarly, governors are not rigorous enough when monitoring the impact of additional funding on pupils' outcomes, including the spending of pupil premium and the PE and sport premium.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' safety and welfare are given the highest priority. They have established a culture throughout the school where pupils are well looked after. Pupils feel safe in school and they know whom to talk to if they are worried.
- Leaders ensure that all staff are given regular training so that they have a very good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. As a result, staff are vigilant in reporting their concerns about pupils' welfare, and pupils are kept safe from harm.
- Leaders ensure that all of the appropriate employment checks are carried out on adults working in school. They ensure that all safeguarding records are thorough and well organised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Across the school, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Too often, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough and work is not pitched accurately enough to meet pupils' needs. This is because teachers are not using assessment information effectively to plan learning that appropriately challenges pupils.
- At times, teachers plan activities that are not focused on the specific writing skills that pupils need to practise and improve. In addition, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to apply their skills in extended pieces of writing and, as a result, their progress slows.
- The teaching of mathematics is also inconsistent. At times, teachers' explanations lack clarity and they do not provide pupils with the resources they need to enable them to

develop a secure understanding. Furthermore, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for pupils to deepen and embed their mathematical understanding through problem solving and reasoning. Consequently, too many pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.

- Phonics teaching is also variable. Where teaching is effective, pupils are highly engaged in their learning and are confident to apply their knowledge of phonics to write unfamiliar words. Where teaching is less strong, however, teachers are not making effective use of assessment to explore pupils' understanding and their misconceptions. Consequently, the mistakes that pupils make when applying their phonics knowledge are not corrected and their learning slows.
- Where teaching is strongest, teachers have high expectations of their pupils. They make effective use of assessment to ensure that learning is accurately pitched so that it is focused on pupils' next steps. Teachers ensure that pupils are given clear guidance to help them to improve, and they address pupils' misconceptions effectively. They give pupils the opportunity to draft, edit and improve their writing and provide them with regular opportunities to write at length across the curriculum. This enables pupils to make strong progress.
- As a result of the effective leadership of SEND, including of the ARP, pupils with SEND are taught well. The interventions that are planned support pupils' learning well, enabling them to make strong progress. The effective support they are given also ensures that pupils with SEND are fully integrated into mainstream classes. Pupils participate fully in classroom life, successfully applying the skills that they have learned to their work in class. Teaching assistants are skilled. They know the pupils well and are clear about their next steps. Consequently, they provide effective support for the pupils they work with, enabling them to make strong progress.
- The teaching of foundation subjects is also variable. Some subjects are taught well. For example, effective teaching in art enables pupils to develop key skills and produce work of a high standard. In some other subjects, however, teachers' weak subject knowledge limits the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have established an inclusive, nurturing culture in which the pupils' welfare is paramount. Pupils know there are adults in school they can talk to if they have any worries. As a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils are taught to celebrate one another's differences and they know that it is important to respect the opinions and beliefs of others. Consequently, there are very few incidents of racism or bullying. On the rare occasion that these do occur, most pupils are confident that adults deal with them effectively.
- The family support coordinator delivers a wide range of interventions that effectively support and develop pupils' social and emotional well-being. Consequently, pupils' self-esteem and confidence improve and this enables them to be ready to learn.

- The school's curriculum provides a range of opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. As a result, pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe, for example when online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. As a result of inconsistencies in teaching, pupils' attitudes to learning are variable. When teaching is strong, pupils concentrate, are enthusiastic and show high levels of interest in their learning. For example, the current Year 4 topic, 'The Ancient Egyptians', has captured pupils' interest. Consequently, pupils have positive attitudes to their learning and work with focused concentration.
- On the other hand, where teaching is less strong, some pupils quickly lose interest and are easily distracted from their learning. They do not work to the best of their ability and the presentation of their work also declines. While this rarely disturbs the learning of others, when their concentration wanes, pupils do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Most of the time, pupils' conduct around the school is calm and orderly. At lunchtime, pupils are sociable and chat quietly, which creates a pleasant atmosphere in the dining hall. At breaktimes, pupils benefit from a range of activities and play together harmoniously.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND have higher rates of absence, but leaders are taking effective action to tackle this. As a result, the attendance of pupils who are persistently absent is quickly improving.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a decline in pupils' outcomes in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2. In 2018, the progress that pupils made across key stage 2 was well below the national averages.
- Outcomes in writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1, however, are strong. In 2018, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard and greater depth were in line with the national averages.
- As a result of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, the progress that current pupils are making in writing is variable. When teaching is effective, pupils develop stamina for writing. They quickly become increasingly accurate in their use of punctuation, and their vocabulary is richer and their handwriting improves. Where teaching is weaker, however, pupils do not develop these skills quickly enough. Consequently, the progress they make is weak, particularly in the accuracy of their spelling.
- The progress that pupils make in mathematics is also variable. Too often, pupils are given work that is too easy, or does not enable them to apply their knowledge and understanding to more challenging work. As a result, too many pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Across the school, pupils' progress in reading is more consistent. Younger pupils are

increasingly confident about applying their knowledge of phonics to read unknown words. Pupils have positive attitudes to reading, and talk knowledgeably about the books they have read. Over the past three years, the progress that pupils have made in reading, across key stage 2, has been broadly in line with national averages. Furthermore, in 2018, the proportions of pupils who attained the expected standard and greater depth in reading, at the end of key stage 1, were above the national averages.

- Disadvantaged pupils are currently making progress that is in line with that of their peers. Consequently, they are not making strong enough progress to catch up with other pupils nationally.
- As a result of effective leadership and well-planned interventions, pupils with SEND make strong progress from their starting points. This enables them to learn well across the curriculum.
- The progress that pupils make in the foundation subjects is variable. In some subjects, for example in art, pupils develop a range of key skills and apply these to produce work of a high standard. In other subjects, for example science, pupils do not consistently develop a secure understanding of key concepts.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision. Their plans to bring about improvement, however, lack precision and they do not check on the quality of teaching with enough rigour.
- As a result, the quality of teaching in the early years provision is inconsistent. At times, the assessments that teachers make are not precise enough. Consequently, some of the tasks planned do not meet the children's needs well enough and do not enable them to develop their skills. When this happens, children do not persevere with a task and become quickly distracted, which slows their learning.
- When teaching is effective, teachers plan activities that engage children's interest and enable them to practise and develop their skills well. Children enjoy these activities, working with enthusiasm and perseverance. They take a genuine pride in their learning. For example, one boy was very keen to share his writing about the solar system.
- The quality of adults' questioning is also variable. Some adults make skilful use of questioning to deepen children's understanding and challenge their thinking. They also model a wide range of vocabulary to enhance children's language development. Other adults, however, do not support children's learning effectively enough. When this happens, children are not sufficiently challenged and their learning is not moved on quickly enough.
- The progress that children make during their time in early years is inconsistent. Overall, the proportions of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception have been broadly in line with national averages, in previous years. Too many children, however, do not make the progress of which they are capable during their time in Reception Year.
- Children have formed positive relationships with one another and they play together

well. They are supportive of others and collaborate well to complete the tasks that they are working on.

- Some routines are not firmly established, for example those used during transition times. At these times, children's behaviour is not managed effectively enough. Children take too long to settle to their learning and this slows their progress.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate policies and procedures are in place to keep children safe from harm. As a result, children are safe, well looked after, and are happy coming to school.

School details

Unique reference number	110332
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10084358

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	397
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Carole Green
Headteacher	Mrs Helen Shepherd
Telephone number	01296 630276
Website	www.astonclintonschool.co.uk
Email address	office@astonclinton.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2015

Information about this school

- Aston Clinton School is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision offering 10 places for pupils with speech, communication and language needs. Pupils are integrated into mainstream classes and are only taken out of class for individual or small-group interventions.
- The local authority has commissioned two teaching excellence practitioners to support school leaders with their work to improve the quality of teaching in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average. However, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is significantly below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the

national average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in all year groups and classes, across a range of subjects. Some sessions were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at the quality of pupils' work during lessons and through a focused scrutiny of work in books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other school leaders and staff. They also met with a representative of the local authority and the governing body. They met with the school's designated safeguarding leads.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance and behaviour. Information about governance, including the minutes of governing body meetings, was examined. The school's self-evaluation summary, school development plan and supporting evidence were scrutinised, together with information on the school's website.
- Inspectors met with parents at the beginning of the school day and took account of the 85 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, including 53 free-text comments.
- Inspectors considered the views of 22 staff who completed Ofsted's confidential online survey.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read, and talked with pupils in lessons and around the school to gather their views. They also met formally with groups of pupils and took account of the 65 responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Pupils' behaviour was observed in lessons, around the school, and during breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding records and the single central record of recruitment checks on adults working with pupils.

Inspection team

Leah Goulding, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Shaughnessy	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Bulmer	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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