

Ashdene Primary School

Thoresway Road, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 6LJ

Inspection dates

12–13 March 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher has driven the development of the school with determination since taking charge in 2016. She has the highest aspirations for pupils and staff. Together with a very effective senior leadership team, she has brought about rapid and highly effective improvements in every area of the school.
- The governors provide very strong leadership. They are knowledgeable and dedicated. They provide the right balance of support and challenge to ensure that the quality of education is always improving.
- Leaders have designed a curriculum that is vibrant and very well planned. This supports pupils' outstanding progress in a wide range of subjects, including reading, writing, mathematics, art, science and computing.
- The impact of teaching over time is outstanding. Teaching is innovative and imaginative. Consequently, pupils are keen to learn. On rare occasions when instructions are not always clear, pupils do not understand the steps they need to take to complete tasks successfully. When this happens, pupils become more dependent on adult support.
- Pupils are very well cared for and feel safe. Their attendance is excellent. They display high levels of respect towards each other and adults.
- Pupils have a strong sense of pride in their school community. They are confident and curious learners. Pupils are taught to be responsible and compassionate. They play an active part in establishing a warm and inclusive atmosphere. Their personal development is outstanding.
- Attainment throughout the school is exceptionally high. At the end of key stages 1 and 2, pupils routinely achieve well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. Actions to close the gap in performance between the most able boys and girls are having a positive impact.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported. These pupils make the same strong progress as other pupils in the school.
- The early years provision is outstanding. The early years leader is an excellent role model who sets high expectations for teaching and learning. Staff have created a stimulating learning environment in which children flourish and make substantial progress in all areas of learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to embed strategies to develop confidence in the most able boys, so that their progress is as excellent as that of girls in reading and writing.
- Build even further on the high-quality teaching, by ensuring that teachers' instructions help pupils understand the steps needed to make progress and complete tasks successfully.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The headteacher, very well supported by the deputy headteacher, has brought about significant improvements in the school. Together, they have created a culture of high expectations for themselves, staff and pupils. All members of the school community rise to these high expectations.
- Leaders are unwavering in their focus to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This has been instrumental in raising the school's effectiveness. Leaders use their knowledge of pupils and staff to make sure that everyone is doing their very best. Leaders offer praise when it is due and challenge when it is needed. They make well-informed decisions about staff recruitment and deployment to ensure that pupils have access to high-quality teaching during their time in school.
- The school's programme of professional development means that there is a growing pool of skilled leaders. Senior and middle leaders are highly effective in their role and make a significant contribution to the leadership of the school. Subject leaders are knowledgeable and ambitious. They are expected to make a positive difference and deliver results. There is a climate of strong teamwork and mutual accountability which improves school leadership.
- Leaders monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and progress. Leaders focus meticulously on reviewing individual pupils' progress in meetings with teachers. Leaders set precise targets to address any gaps in learning and plan support so that pupils catch up quickly.
- The school's rich and exciting curriculum is used as a powerful tool to raise standards. It is very well planned, challenging and highly engaging. Leaders' careful monitoring of the whole curriculum ensures that pupils develop their knowledge and skills in different subjects exceptionally well. A wide range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, craft and creative experiences, enhance the curriculum even further.
- The special educational needs coordinator is highly effective. She knows the pupils extremely well and uses her wide-ranging professional knowledge to identify pupils who need extra support. Working with parents, carers and external agencies, she designs bespoke interventions to support pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND make substantial progress.
- A very high proportion of parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, or who spoke to inspectors were highly complementary about the school. A comment that was typical of many parents' views was: 'This is such a great, caring school with passionate teachers. My children are incredibly happy and have a great love of learning.'
- Leaders and governors are committed to ensuring that pupils develop a strong set of values that enable them to make a positive contribution to their community and beyond. This is reflected in the emphasis on promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Leaders make sure that 'there are no outsiders' in Ashdene Primary School. These qualities help pupils to make the most of school and become responsible members of British society.

- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is sharply focused on removing barriers to learning, so that outcomes for them improve. Leaders track the progress of disadvantaged pupils carefully and devise bespoke programmes promoting their social, emotional and academic development.
- Leaders have used the primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding very well to invest in sports coaching and new equipment that enhances pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy taking part in competitive tournaments, including golf, cross country and rugby. They are proud of their success.

Governance of the school

- A talented group of governors led by a highly effective chair offers compelling support to the leadership of the school. Governors are dedicated and uncompromising in their ambition to provide the best education for the pupils.
- Governors know the school very well. They have a clear strategic overview and are accurate in their assessments of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are supportive and proud of all that has been achieved. They challenge leaders to make continued improvements.
- Governors have a range of skills, both in education and in other fields such as finance. They use these to great effect to bring about improvements in school. However, they are not complacent. They keep up to date with regular training to make sure that they stay abreast of issues affecting the school. This includes safeguarding training.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The leadership of safeguarding is highly effective in communicating the school's policies and systems so that all staff understand them well. Leaders keep detailed records. They systematically review all concerns, both within the school and with other agencies. For example, they follow up any unexplained absences quickly so that pupils attend well.
- Staff are well trained in line with their responsibilities. They receive frequent updates from members of the safeguarding team. The result is that the culture within the school is one of vigilance.
- The welfare and well-being of each pupil take a high priority in the school. The safeguarding team works closely with all staff, parents and pupils, providing highly effective support. Good links with external support agencies mean that leaders are able to initiate help for vulnerable pupils quickly in order to support the whole family.
- Parents agree that staff are vigilant in nurturing pupils and keeping them safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- The teamwork at the school is superb. Teaching staff share skills and expertise so that they learn from each other. Consequently, teaching is continually improving.
- Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to plan lessons which excite pupils and

capture their attention straightaway. For example, pupils are challenged to investigate the stability and aerodynamics of a car after receiving a letter from a race track director. Teachers are clear that the learning is purposeful. It is focused on developing pupils' scientific skills and vocabulary.

- The teaching of mathematics develops pupils' fluency and confidence well. Pupils' books show that, over time, teachers build knowledge incrementally. There is consistency in the way that mathematics is taught. Teachers deepen pupils' understanding by challenging them to give reasons for their answers. Pupils apply logic to solve mathematical problems and to test out their knowledge. There are many opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils' standards in reading are excellent across the school. Pupils are confident readers and use their very well-developed phonics skills to help them to decode words and support their writing. There is a deliberate strategy to ensure that all pupils read widely and often. Pupils enjoy the range of challenging reading material. Older pupils are motivated by the charts in each class showing the titles of the books they have read during the year. Pupils read, listen and respond critically to texts of all kinds. They take great pleasure in reading.
- Writing and reading development are seen as interdependent and delivered through carefully chosen texts to provoke pupils' imagination. Pupils practise and develop their writing and reading skills across the curriculum. They make excellent progress because teachers help them to acquire a rich and broad vocabulary.
- Even young pupils are taught to edit and improve their writing. They use tools to help them to identify mistakes in spelling, grammar and punctuation. All writing is purposeful and linked to the creative curriculum. Pupils develop stamina and confidence to write at length and for different purposes as they progress through school.
- Teaching in other subjects is equally strong and used to realise the school's aims to develop pupils' understanding of themselves as 'pupils at Ashdene, British citizens and children of the world'. For example, pupils learn to write for a purpose when they draft a postcard in French to a pupil in the island of Reunion.
- Teachers have secure subject knowledge across the curriculum. For example, the corridors and classrooms celebrate the excellent work that pupils produce in their art lessons. They are taught a wide range of techniques, influence and styles. They take inspiration from a wide range of artists such as Frank Stella and Ruth Daniels.
- Rarely do pupils lose concentration because they are keen to learn and take pride in their work. Occasionally, the steps for progress are not clear to pupils when adults are not precise enough in their instructions. When this happens, pupils need more adult support to complete their tasks successfully.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The pupils are deeply proud of their school. They told inspectors that the best thing

about it was 'the great teachers'. Pupils are highly articulate and discuss their learning with great enthusiasm, saying that they especially enjoy the challenging work.

- The school curriculum provides exceptionally well for pupils' personal development. They are taught to identify their own personal learning goals and steps to success in order to help them achieve their dreams and ambitions. Teachers consider carefully the interests, abilities and experiences of all pupils so that each has the chance to shine.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of bullying, although they say that it rarely happens. School records support this. Pupils know that unkind behaviour of any sort is not tolerated. They are helped to recognise and celebrate differences and have excellent strategies to solve friendship problems.
- Pupils confirm that they feel safe in school and learn how to keep themselves safe in different circumstances. They can explain many aspects of this work in detail. For example, they describe how to keep themselves safe when online. They understand how to prevent problems occurring and how to report concerns.
- The school values the opinions of pupils and actively involves them in shaping the school rules. Through the school's 'mini managers' initiative, pupils decide the five most important behaviours that will keep everybody safe and happy on the playground.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of equality and diversity which is taught through the curriculum. One example includes the work covered in a topic about crime and punishment. Pupils understand that prejudice is harmful and that some people are treated unfairly because of racism, sexism or ignorance.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to engage and work hard in lessons. They collaborate very well, for example when sharing information technology (IT) equipment used to create a comic strip. They value each other's opinions or contributions and give encouraging feedback on the quality of the work. This further deepens learning.
- Pupils are respectful, thoughtful and well-mannered. They move around the school sensibly. They greet visitors with a warm welcome, contributing to the school's happy, inclusive atmosphere.
- Lunchtime and playtimes are sociable occasions where pupils play together harmoniously. Mini-managers take their responsibility seriously. They ensure that there is ample equipment; they let leaders know when it is not fit for purpose.
- The very high attendance of pupils endorses their enjoyment of school. The learning mentor monitors attendance very diligently. She has worked closely with the families of disadvantaged pupils and their attendance has improved as a result. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent is well below average.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- In each year group and across the curriculum, including in English and mathematics, current pupils make substantial progress from their starting points across a range of

subjects. Academic standards have risen over time and are very high.

- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 has been well above the national average for reading, writing and mathematics for the past two years. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards has also been significantly higher than average in these subjects. This represents very strong progress from pupils' starting points on entry to the school.
- In 2018, some most-able boys did not make the same rate of progress as girls in reading and writing by the end key stage 2. Leaders have taken actions to close this gap. This has included the use of texts that have high appeal for boys in order to stimulate their writing. Leaders have also introduced electronic tools to enable teachers and pupils to track their reading practice. Pupils receive regular feedback and praise, encouraging them to read more widely and frequently. These actions are having a very positive impact for all pupils, but especially for most-able boys.
- Teaching in key stage 1 is tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils and build on the excellent start they receive in the early years. For the past two years, attainment at the end of Year 2 has been above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils who are achieving greater depth in these areas is also improving. It was above average in 2018. This prepares pupils very well for their learning in key stage 2.
- Phonics teaching is highly effective and supports pupils to make excellent progress in using their phonics skills for reading and spelling. The proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was significantly higher than the national average in 2018. Current pupils show similarly strong phonics knowledge and apply their skills in reading and spelling.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND throughout the school make equally strong progress from their starting points. This is because highly effective teaching and carefully targeted support ensure that their needs are met. Attainment at the expected standard is consistently high at the end of key stages 1 and 2, though comparisons with national data are not useful. This is because the numbers of disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are very small.
- The quality of work in pupils' books and displays around the school are of a very high standard. A striking feature of pupils' learning is the school's rich and inspirational curriculum. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to reflect deeply on their learning. This contributes to the outstanding progress that they make. The school is successfully fulfilling its vision for pupils to be 'passionate about learning'.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- The highly effective leader for the early years is an excellent role model for the staff she manages. She and her team constantly strive to make the learning opportunities for children inspiring. Teaching over time is never less than good. Much of it leads to rapid progress. Children are well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- The environment is exciting and stimulating. The activities motivate children to explore and find out things for themselves. This is illustrated when children work without adult support to make carrier bags out of junk. They are challenged to make sure that the

handles will carry equipment of different weights.

- Children, including disadvantaged children and those with SEND, experience a really good start to life in school. This is because adults assess children's needs carefully and tailor their experiences accordingly.
- Most children start with skills that are higher than those typical for their age and make outstanding progress. By the time they leave the Reception class, they achieve a good level of development and are very well prepared to join Year 1 as confident learners.
- Exceptionally strong links with parents and pre-school providers help children to settle quickly when they enter the early years provision. Staff make every effort to get to know children and their families well when they start school.
- High expectations and the consistent reinforcement of daily routines in a nurturing environment establish a firm base for the children's excellent behaviour.
- Parents receive regular information about their children's progress through the learning journals which are shared weekly. Parents are encouraged to play a full and active part in their children's learning. There are opportunities for them to stay and play with their children and to attend workshops to strengthen links between home and school.
- Staff keep children safe and care for them well in the early years. Staff are vigilant in safeguarding children and make swift referrals if they have any concerns. Safeguarding is highly effective because the robust policy and procedures are well known and understood by all staff.

School details

Unique reference number	111227
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10057967

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	412
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Anne Gadsen
Headteacher	Collette Mather
Telephone number	01625 383232
Website	www.ashdeneschool.net
Email address	head@ashdene.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	January 2018

Information about this school

- The school is larger than average and caters for pupils from four to 11 years old. There are two classes in each year group.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND who receive additional support is lower than average. The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is lower than average.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. They examined pupils' work in books from across the curriculum. Inspectors also considered assessment information.
- Inspectors heard pupils read, both individually and during their class activities.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils formally in groups and informally around school.
- Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and took account of the views of 127 parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Inspectors also considered the views of 18 staff who completed the staff survey and the free-text comments from 75 parents.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at playtimes and when pupils were moving around the school.
- Meetings were held with two governors, senior leaders, middle leaders and pastoral staff. Inspectors spoke to local authority representatives on the phone.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance and its areas for development.
- Inspectors looked at attendance and behaviour records.
- Inspectors reviewed the safeguarding documentation and considered how this related to daily practice, as well as speaking with staff and pupils. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

Cathy Parkinson, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Bramwell	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Dimeck	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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