

Inspection of a good school: Whitfield Aspen School

Mayfield Road, Whitfield, Dover, Kent CT16 3LJ

Inspection dates:

11–12 September 2019

Outcome

Whitfield Aspen School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of Whitfield Aspen School. They feel very happy and safe. Pupils told us that they enjoy a wide range of activities, which include trips to art galleries, outings to see local art work, and visits to wildlife parks.

Pupils work hard. They have expert help in lessons because teachers are well trained. Staff expect pupils to try their best. Pupils live up to these high expectations.

At the heart of the school is the belief that everyone is included. This means that all pupils, and particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn and enjoy school together. For example, in the whole-school 'sign and sing' assemblies, pupils learn sign language. Pupils are thoughtful, kind and respectful.

Pupils behave well. They listen to staff in lessons and play happily together during social times. Pupils say that bullying only rarely happens and that staff deal with it well if it does occur.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's highly committed staff include every pupil in exciting and interesting activities. Pupils with SEND, and particularly those with education, health and care plans, often join mainstream classes.

All pupils understand the importance of following the school's rules. Disruption in lessons is very rare. As a result, lessons are purposeful and teachers are able to teach what has been planned.

Pupils begin to learn phonics (the sounds that letters make) as soon as they start in Reception Year. They have a good grounding in the early years. This means that pupils are well prepared to start Year 1. By the end of Reception, almost all pupils achieve well, have learned how to behave in lessons, and can read basic sentences.

Leaders make sure that reading is well planned. They have considered carefully when pupils should learn the skills and knowledge needed to develop their reading. Pupils in key stage 2 have a keen interest in reading. They can talk about their favourite authors. In mathematics, leaders understand the skills and knowledge that pupils need to learn throughout the school. They have organised sensibly when and how mathematical knowledge is taught. Teachers have good subject knowledge and clearly explain mathematical topics to pupils. They develop pupils' understanding of mathematics well.

In subjects other than English and mathematics, leaders have mapped out the skills that they want pupils to learn. However, they have not yet decided precisely what knowledge should be taught and when. As a result, in some subjects, such as history and science, some pupils struggle to remember important knowledge. Leaders are aware of this and have begun working with curriculum leaders to make these improvements.

Teachers have the necessary skills and expertise needed to make sure that pupils understand what is taught. Teachers encourage pupils to join in discussions so that they can learn more from the ideas shared. Valuable training supports non-specialist teachers to improve their subject knowledge.

The school is led well by committed leaders. Staff are very proud to work at Whitfield Aspen. Leaders are considerate about teachers' workload when deciding on school policies. Staff are protected from bullying and harassment. They work together very well.

Teachers assess pupils' learning and collect their results three times every year. They use this information to work out how well pupils are achieving. When pupils fall behind in their understanding, teachers provide or organise extra support. This support is effective in making sure pupils, particularly disadvantaged pupils, catch up.

Outside of lessons, pupils develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding in a range of ways. For example, pupils visit art galleries and celebrate religious festivals. The 'forest school' encourages pupils to keep going when things are difficult.

The school has a specially resourced provision that supports pupils with education, health and care plans. Staff provide expert support that meets pupils' needs. This means that pupils with SEND achieve well and are very much a part of the whole school. Pupils with and without SEND learn, socialise and play together well during the school day.

Overall, the school has a full and varied curriculum. Pupils are well prepared when they begin secondary school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff take safeguarding very seriously. Regular safeguarding training means that staff have a good understanding of how to spot signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders work well with external agencies. There is a coordinated approach to ensuring

that pupils are safe.

Governors check that the school keeps detailed records on the suitability of staff to work in school. These records are up to date and organised well.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have taken steps to improve leadership and organise the curriculum so that the full range of national curriculum subjects are taught. However, in some subjects, for example history and science, knowledge is not sequenced well enough so that pupils know more and remember more over time. Leaders need to continue to build on the recent improvements they have made to ensure that knowledge is sequenced consistently well across all subjects.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged Whitfield Aspen School to be good on 25 June 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	118459
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10111256
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	491
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Roger Knight
Headteacher	Jason Cook
Website	www.whitfieldaspenschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14 January 2016

Information about this school

The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. The designated special educational need is profound, severe and complex. The provision has 112 places.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, governors and representatives from the local authority.
- On the first day of the inspection, inspectors focused their activities on reading, science, mathematics and history. In each subject, inspectors met with subject leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff from a meeting with a group of staff and from the responses of 56 staff to the confidential questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.
- Inspectors considered the views of 45 parents who responded to the confidential Ofsted parental questionnaire, including 45 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Harry Ingham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Hilary Macdonald

Her Majesty's Inspector

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