

Inspection of a good school: Ashurst Primary School

New Glade Hill, Off Chain Lane, Blackbrook, St Helens, Merseyside WA11 9QJ

Inspection dates:

5–6 November 2019

Outcome

Ashurst Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, the inspector has some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to be part of this school. Pupils feel cared for and safe. They are happy in school and they enjoy learning.

Pupils' behaviour has improved in recent years. Staff set high expectations for pupils' conduct. There are no disruptions to lessons. Pupils focus well on their learning. Pupils say that bullying is rare. This is because staff act swiftly to sort any such instances.

Everyone is welcome. All pupils feel included and part of the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need to succeed. Pupils say that they have a voice in the school. Parents and carers are also positive about the way in which leaders take on board their suggestions.

Leaders and teachers are working hard to improve the curriculum. However, some subjects are not as well developed as others. Leaders know that more needs to be done to make sure that pupils know and remember more in subjects such as geography and history.

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

The headteacher has set a clear direction for the school. She has worked with staff to develop their skills as leaders. All staff share an ambition to improve the school. Staff appreciate the steps that leaders have taken to reduce their workload.

A wide range of activities enrich the school's curriculum. Pupils enjoy events such as multicultural weeks and opportunities to learn about careers. These events help pupils to develop their pride, self-esteem and resilience. This runs throughout the school. For example, I observed a teacher helping a child in Nursery to share with others and take turns. I watched a presentation by Year 6 pupils on how to successfully handle difficult

social issues.

Leaders value the development of pupils' reading skills. Pupils' attainment in reading in key stage 1 is as good as that of other pupils nationally. Teachers structure pupils' learning in phonics well. Throughout the Reception Year and key stage 1, leaders organise pupils into groups by their ability to match pupils' learning to their needs. This also makes sure that pupils who have difficulty are supported well to sound out words accurately. However, pupils' vocabulary is limited. All but the most able pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 continue to sound out the majority of words in the books that they read. This affects their fluency and ability to understand what they read. In response to the low progress and attainment of pupils at the end of key stage 2, teachers plan lessons to focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills. This makes sure that pupils improve their reading ability as they move through key stage 2.

In mathematics, teachers plan lessons to build on pupils' prior learning. This helps pupils to build their knowledge and skills. Pupils have opportunities to solve problems to deepen their understanding. At the end of key stage 2, pupils' attainment in mathematics is broadly similar to that of pupils nationally.

Teachers set the same expectations for pupils with SEND as they do for all pupils. The special educational needs coordinator makes sure that SEND pupils' individual plans meet their personal needs so that they can access the same curriculum as other pupils. The school's curriculum is also designed to set similar expectations for disadvantaged pupils.

There is a large variation in how well pupils' learning is planned between subjects in the curriculum. Science and art are well developed. New learning builds on pupils' prior learning. This is because the planning of knowledge and skills pupils are expected to learn is logical. In the early years, learning is designed to respond to pupils' needs. For example, the early years leader has developed a stage area for children to perform on. Children enjoy acting or performing with musical instruments. This is helping to improve their learning in expressive arts. However, in key stages 1 and 2 expectations for learning in subjects such as geography and history do not build well enough on what pupils already know. Learning is largely based on facts that do not enable pupils to form a larger understanding of topic and themes within these subjects. For example, teachers do not connect pupils' prior knowledge to new learning. As a result, pupils' recall of their learning is patchy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The headteacher and governors have put pupils' safety at the heart of everything they do. Staff and governors are well trained. As a result, they have a good understanding of issues that pupils face in the local community. Concerns about pupils are followed up rigorously. The pastoral manager helps to support pupils and their families to make sure that pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs are met.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe online and in a range of other situations.

They say that they feel safe because of the care of staff. They know that staff will act on their concerns to support them.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have defined pupils' learning effectively. For example, in science pupils' work shows clearly sequenced learning that builds on previous work. This helps to develop pupils' skills and knowledge well. However, in other subjects, such as geography and history, pupils' work shows that they learn disconnected facts about the topic that they have covered. There are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their learning so that their knowledge builds to form larger ideas. Leaders should ensure that teachers clearly define what they want pupils to learn in each topic. Teachers should identify where pupils will use this knowledge in the future so that pupils' understanding builds across topics and across different year groups.
- Following disappointing results at the end of key stage 2 in reading over the last two years, leaders have taken steps to improve reading across the school. Their focus on phonics ensures that pupils sound out words well. However, pupils do not read words swiftly enough to aid their fluency and comprehension at the end of key stage 1 and beginning of key stage 2. Leaders should ensure that their aims for the school's reading curriculum equip pupils with the necessary vocabulary to be able to read swiftly and with comprehension at the end of key stage 1 and at the start of key stage 2.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged Ashurst Primary School to be good on 27 May 2015.

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	104771
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	10087683
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jacqueline Halligan
Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Houghton
Website	www.ashurstprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 May 2015

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed to post in January 2016.
- The governing body runs before- and after-school provision on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- I met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders throughout the inspection.
- I spoke with representatives from St Helens local authority.
- I met with groups of pupils from key stage 2 to ask them about safeguarding. I also met with the headteacher, governors and other school staff. I reviewed documentation which included the school's safeguarding policy, the register of checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- I looked at the headteacher's reports to governors which detail the school's behaviour records, observed pupils at lunchtime and discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils.
- I spoke with parents at the start of the school day. I also took account of 22 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey and 15 responses to the staff survey.
- I considered the subjects of reading, mathematics and history as part of this

inspection. For these subjects, I spoke with the headteacher, met with curriculum leaders, teachers and pupils, undertook an analysis of pupils' work and visited lessons. I heard pupils read. I also spoke to key stage 2 pupils about their work across the curriculum.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2019