

Inspection of Ashmead Combined School

Cole Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 8SU

Inspection dates: 15–16 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are rightly proud of their friendly school. They told us that they enjoy coming to school and that their teachers are kind and caring. Pupils feel valued. As one pupil explained to us, 'Everyone feels like they matter.' Pupils go out of their way to help one another.

Staff want the very best for their pupils. They know pupils very well and make sure that pupils get the right help to be successful.

Pupils feel very safe. They told us that bullying is rare. They are clear that if they have any problems, there is always a trusted adult who they can talk to and who will deal with any issues quickly. Pupil 'befrienders' are also always on hand to help make sure that breaktimes are a fun and happy occasion.

Pupils love their learning. Teachers seize every opportunity to ensure that pupils learn from first-hand experiences. Visiting speakers and trips to places such as the Tower of London help to enhance the curriculum and are very popular with the pupils.

Parents and carers are very supportive. All parents who completed our survey recommended the school. 'I have nothing but praise' reflected the views of many.

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

Exceptional leadership of Ashmead Combined School helps to bring out the best in both staff and pupils. Staff have high ambitions for every pupil. They work together with the shared aim of providing pupils with the 'roots' and 'wings' to flourish.

Key aspects of the curriculum are highly effective, but this is not yet the case across the whole range of subjects. Pupils' learning in English, mathematics and science is extremely strong. This is because the curriculum has been carefully organised so that pupils build on what they know and can do. As a result, by the time pupils leave key stage 2, they achieve very high outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics. While improving, the curriculum in other subjects, such as history and geography, is not yet as strong.

Reading has a high priority from the start of the early years. Adults read regularly to children. Children particularly look forward to the weekly 'mystery reader' visit. In the younger years, children listen well and join in with enthusiasm during story time. Adults use songs and rhyme to bring books to life. Staff are well trained to teach phonics. Pupils who need extra help with their reading are quickly identified and supported to catch up well. As a result, pupils go on to become confident, fluent readers who enjoy reading for pleasure.

Leaders have created a culture where staff feel very well supported. They provide highly effective training for staff. Staff also work collaboratively to share expertise. Not all teachers' subject knowledge is as strong in some subjects as it is for the core

subjects. Where this is the case, leaders are making extremely effective use of internal and external expertise to put additional support in place.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Leaders quickly identify their needs and appropriate plans are then put in place. Teaching assistants are very well trained. They work effectively with teachers to plan activities that are well matched to the needs of the pupil. As a result, pupils with SEND make great progress and play an active part in school life.

Children in early years, including two-year-olds, are settled. Good communication between home and school helps children get off to a flying start. Children show high levels of concentration and involvement in their chosen activities. In Reception, adults provide plenty of rich opportunities to develop children's early vocabulary and communication skills. This is not as strong in Nursery.

Pupils' behaviour throughout the school, including in early years, is exemplary. Staff have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils rise to these. Classes are calm and purposeful. Pupils are polite, caring and considerate towards one another. In lessons, they are enthusiastic and show very positive attitudes to their learning. Staff help to foster the attitudes that pupils need to be successful learners. For example, pupils develop the skills to persevere with new challenges.

The school contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development. This is promoted through the curriculum, assemblies and social times. The monthly focus on a different value helps pupils to reflect on important themes such as kindness and confidence. Pupils are proud of their school council. Elected members take their roles seriously. They work tirelessly on fundraising for charitable causes and making a positive contribution to school life which benefits all.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Keeping pupils safe is a top priority. Parents, pupils and staff all agree that pupils are safe in school. Staff are well trained to spot if a pupil is at risk of harm. They know how to report any concerns they might have. Leaders act quickly on any concerns and work effectively with external agencies to support pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught to keep safe in a range of situations, including online. They know not to share personal information online or chat to people they do not know.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In the core curriculum, pupils are extremely well supported to practise, build on and secure their knowledge and skills through a carefully planned curriculum. This

is not yet fully the case in all of the foundation subjects. The school should continue its very effective work in developing the curriculum so that pupils achieve highly across the breadth of subjects.

- Some teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong in the foundation curriculum as it is for the core curriculum. Leaders need to continue the effective work already started to make sure that all teachers have the necessary subject knowledge to teach well across the curriculum. This will further ensure that pupils do their very best in all subjects.
- In the early years, opportunities to develop children's vocabulary and communication skills are not as strong in Nursery as they are in Reception. Leaders need to ensure that the range and quality of opportunities to develop these are strengthened in Nursery.

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 the school and 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	110356
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10122210
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	718
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emma Gregory
Co-headteachers	Mike Pearse and Marcus Pickover
Website	www.ashmeadschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 April 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Ashmead Combined School is a larger-than-average primary school.
- The school has a nursery with provision for two-year-olds.
- The school is part of the Aylesbury Learning Partnership.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We met with the co-headteachers, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinators (SENDCos), the leaders for early years, curriculum leaders, a group of non-teaching staff and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. We made a telephone call to a representative from the local authority.
- We did deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, writing, science, geography and history. In each subject, we met with curriculum leaders, visited lessons, talked to pupils, spoke to teachers and looked at pupils' work.
- We reviewed safeguarding records, including the central record of recruitment checks on staff.

- We spoke to parents during the inspection and considered the views of 52 parents who responded to Ofsted’s parental questionnaire, Parent View.
- We considered the views of staff from conversations and took account of the 40 responses to Ofsted’s staff survey.
- We also spoke with pupils formally and informally about their day-to-day experiences at the school.

Inspection team

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