

Inspection of Axminster Community Primary Academy

Stoney Lane, Axminster, Devon EX13 5BU

Inspection dates: 21–22 January 2020

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Ambition is at the heart of Axminster Community Primary Academy. Staff aim to make sure that every pupil reaches their full potential. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that the school has improved considerably. They say that the staff are kind and caring.

Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils told us that, on rare occasions, some pupils find it difficult to manage their behaviour. Nevertheless, when this happens they say that adults manage any disruption very well. It is the same with bullying. Pupils told us that bullying incidents are rare. If it does occur, staff deal with it swiftly. Pupils are confident that adults keep them safe from harm.

High expectations permeate the school. This has not always been the case. Pupils are keen to learn and enjoy the curriculum. They speak positively of the additional enrichment opportunities. Every pupil learns to play at least one musical instrument. Pupils are particularly complimentary about the wide range of after-school clubs.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the changes that have taken place. A typical comment that encapsulated many was, 'The school has improved significantly. Staff have created a happy and positive environment in which my children can thrive.'

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

The quality of education is good. Leaders, including governors, have successfully steered the school through a challenging period. The curriculum covers the knowledge and skills required. Leaders have ambitious plans in place to develop the foundation subjects further. In subjects where these plans are being realised, pupils achieve well. Pupils' knowledge of modern languages is of a high standard. This is because the curriculum is well planned. Pupils in key stage 1 secure key concepts early. This prepares them well for modern languages in key stage 2. Geography and history are similar. However, not all subjects are as well organised. Leaders have appropriate plans in place to address this.

Many of the staff are new to their careers. They appreciate the training and support they receive from leaders. Those new to curriculum leadership are growing into their roles. However, these colleagues need further training so that they can be more effective.

The more experienced leaders for mathematics and English are ambitious for their subjects. They check regularly that teachers follow well-structured plans. The organisation of the curriculum enables pupils to revisit key concepts. Teachers do not progress within subject curriculums until pupils' learning is secure. Curriculum leaders make sure that children in the early years secure the fundamental core knowledge and skills to be successful in Year 1. This prepares children well for the next stage of their education. Staff go by the motto 'a rising tide raises all ships'.

The early years leader ensures that children who enter the school with knowledge and skills below what would be expected catch up quickly. There is a relentless focus on developing children's language. Leaders have invested in an early years special educational needs coordinator. This is having a positive impact on children's development. The classroom is a hive of activity. Outdoor learning promotes children's physical development well. During the inspection, children were keen for an inspector to 'cross the sea' using planks and tyres. Children are inquisitive and want to learn. This is because staff instil a thirst for learning and curiosity.

Teachers know their pupils well. Staff expect pupils to behave and work hard. They set high expectations and promote resilience. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). During lessons, we saw how teachers include pupils with SEND in lessons and activities. Planning is adapted to ensure that these pupils achieve in line with their abilities. Teachers monitor additional support closely and adjust it accordingly.

Leaders provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to realise their aspirations. This includes visits to Exeter university. They ensure pupils learn how to be a good citizen. Through their 'Axminster Six' programme, pupils develop essential life skills which prepare them for life in modern Britain. Pupils are very positive about the programme. One pupil said that he now wants to be a police officer.

Reading is at the core of the curriculum. The subject leader has successfully implemented strategies to develop a love of reading. This includes investment into books and training. Children in the Reception class get off to a flying start. Staff teach phonics three times a day to help children who are behind to catch up. This continues into key stage 1. However, some of the books for pupils who find reading challenging are not closely matched to their reading ability. This hampers their capacity to read confidently and fluently.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. Training is ongoing. They have had guidance on neglect, peer-on-peer abuse, radicalisation and drugs trafficking. Staff know what to look out for if a pupil may be at risk of harm. The members of the safeguarding team are diligent in their approach. They ensure that pupils and their families receive any additional support they may need. There are thorough recruitment checks and induction for adults before they can work or volunteer at the school.

Governors know they have an important role to play in keeping pupils safe. At every meeting and visit to the school, they discuss safeguarding and act on any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The headteacher has successfully raised staff's and pupils' expectations. Senior leaders have steadily introduced a new ambitious curriculum. However, all curriculum plans have not yet been fully implemented. Leaders must ensure that this is done swiftly.
- Many curriculum leaders are early in their careers and new to their roles. They are motivated and determined to be successful. Senior leaders must ensure that new curriculum leaders acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to be effective. This will ensure continued success to realise the school's ambition.
- Some pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read have books that are too challenging. Leaders need to ensure that words in reading books match more closely the sounds that pupils already know. This will help pupils who find reading more challenging to be successful.

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	141523
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10122345
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	207
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Impey
Headteacher	Ross Minton
Website	www.acornacademy.org
Date of previous inspection	5–6 October 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the school has had a significant period of staff turnover, including local governors.
- Axminster primary school is part of Acorn Multi-Academy Trust, a partnership of six primary schools. The work of the school is overseen by the board of trustees.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the chief executive officer of the trust, headteacher, curriculum leaders, the leader with responsibility for pupils with SEND, the early years leader, the leader responsible for early years provision across the trust and a sample of staff. The lead inspector also took into consideration the 23 responses to the staff survey.
- I met with the co-chairs of the local governing body and two trustees, including the chair of trustees.

- We examined a range of documentation provided by the school, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation relating to attendance and behaviour of pupils.
- A significant proportion of the inspection focused on ensuring that pupils are safe. We scrutinised records, tested staff's safeguarding knowledge and spoke with pupils. I met with the designated safeguarding leader and members of the inclusion team.
- We considered the 33 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. A team inspector met with parents at the start of the second day.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, modern languages, science and mathematics. This included visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, meeting with senior and subject leaders and discussions with teachers and pupils. On day two of the inspection, we looked further into the quality of education in geography and history.

Inspection team

Matt Middlemore, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Matthew Shirley

Ofsted Inspector

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