

Inspection of Ashgrove School Ltd

116 Widmore Road, Bromley, Kent BR1 3BE

Inspection dates: 25–27 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Does the school meet the independent school standards?

Yes

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They learn from an early age to take on responsibility and work together. The Year 6 'housemartins' talk proudly about their responsibilities, such as counting house points and whole-school duties. Year 6 pupils are strong role models for other pupils. All pupils learn to become active citizens, giving back to their local community, through supporting charities and causes like the food bank.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils behave well and are kind to each other. Pupils told us that teachers are there for them. Bullying is not tolerated. Parents and carers have every confidence that their children are safe and well cared for.

Leaders are successful at achieving one of the school's main aims: to help pupils in Year 6 gain a place at local selective schools. However, the quality of education for younger pupils does not match the higher expectations and demands of older year groups. The school's approach to helping pupils learn to read is not well developed. Staff have not had enough training about how to teach phonics. Pupils study a wide range of subjects, including sports, music and arts. However, leaders' plans are not clear about how these subjects should be taught.

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

Leaders have tried to tackle the areas of improvement from the previous inspection. One example is the improvement in the outdoors provision in the early years. However, some weaknesses remain. These relate to how well the curriculum is led and managed.

Leaders lack expertise in how to lead early reading. This means that pupils do not learn to read in a coherent way. Pupils learn to read through a 'look and say' approach. They read and recognise whole words, supported with some phonics sessions. However, pupils do not have enough time in the school week to learn phonics. Teachers have not had structured training in phonics, so they do not have the expertise to develop pupils' reading skills effectively. While pupils enjoy reading and they read regularly, they read books where they cannot decode and understand some of the words. Weaker readers are not as well supported in learning to read as they should be. By the end of the inspection, the headteacher had booked training on phonics for some staff.

Subject planning is not well developed. Leaders do not have a clear overview of what pupils will learn in each subject across the school. Plans in too many subjects are vague about identifying the different knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils will be taught, and how they will build on these from year to year.

The weaknesses in leaders' planning and the lack of training for staff combine to have an impact on learning in the early years and Years 1 and 2. Teachers' choice of activities and use of resources do not meet the needs of younger pupils well enough.

As a result, in subjects like humanities and mathematics, younger pupils do not develop a deep enough understanding of what they are learning.

There are some strengths in the early years and Years 1 and 2, for example in art. Here pupils take part in a range of projects, such as 'being a robot' and 'twigs'. They produce high-quality work. Some of this work is on display around the school. These projects help pupils to become curious, engaged and creative learners. They also help pupils to develop their understanding of different cultures and beliefs.

Teachers give older pupils much more demanding work to complete. They have to think and work harder, for example in mathematics, science and computing. In personal, social and health education (PSHE), pupils also learn to think deeply about social issues, such as peer pressure and events that happen in the world around them.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They work well with their teachers and settle to work quickly. They take pride in their work.

Leaders ensure pupils have opportunities to develop their physical well-being. Pupils use local facilities and take part in a range of sporting activities, including squash and tennis. Leaders have invested in outdoor equipment and actively encourage pupils to use it. This includes through incentives such as house points. There is a range of before- and after-school activities, including jazz club, nature club and recorder ensemble. They are well attended. Some parents told inspectors that they would like to see more clubs, including sports, for younger age groups.

Staff enjoy working at the school, their morale is high. They feel supported by senior leaders but would welcome more training on their subject expertise.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have been checking on teaching. However, their checks are not robust enough. Leaders' plans for improvement are not well developed. In terms of the quality of education for example, plans are too vague about exactly what needs to be improved.

The proprietor has made sure that the school meets all the requirements of the independent school standards and the early years foundation stage. The school also complies with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils learn how to stay safe in all sorts of ways, including from visiting speakers. They are very clear about how to stay safe when online.

Leaders make sure that staff learn about a wide range of risks to pupils, including county lines and forced marriage. Staff are alert to any changes in pupils' behaviour. Leaders deal with any reported concerns quickly. They liaise with external agencies

appropriately. All pre-employment checks are completed in line with statutory requirements.

Parents commented that leaders ensure that the school premises are safe and secure. The school's safeguarding policy includes the latest statutory guidance. It is available on the school's website.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders' approach to helping pupils learn to read has too many weaknesses. Staff have not had the training needed to make them experts in teaching phonics. Senior leaders lack the knowledge and understanding needed to evaluate how well early reading is being taught. Leaders need to create a coherent strategy to help pupils learn to read fluently and accurately, right from Reception. This strategy must include leaders ensuring:
 - training for all staff and senior leaders
 - pupils read from books that match the sounds they are learning
 - the activities pupils undertake link to a carefully planned and sequenced systematic synthetic phonics programme
 - pupils have enough time in the school week to learn phonics
 - strategies are in place to ensure that pupils who are in danger of falling behind are given support to catch up
 - careful monitoring and evaluation of how well their strategy is working.
- Leaders need to sharpen the coordination and planning of the curriculum across the school. In too many subjects, including in the early years, plans do not identify the subject-specific knowledge, skills and key vocabulary that pupils will learn. The school's approach does not help teachers to know how their teaching fits with what pupils have learned or will learn in the future. Leaders need to make sure subject content is identified, sequenced and well planned across all subjects in all year groups.
- Overall, teachers demand more of their pupils in key stage 2. They give pupils hard work that makes them think. However, this is not the case across the curriculum in the early years and in key stage 1. In these age groups, pupils do not develop the knowledge and skills that they should. Leaders should ensure that all teachers have subject-specific training about how to deliver their subject to meet the needs of younger pupils.
- Leaders need to sharpen their evaluation and direction of the school's work. They need training on how to evaluate the quality of education being provided to pupils. They also need to refine their approach to the school improvement planning, being clear about the specific actions that they will take to improve the curriculum and how resources will be used to achieve these actions.

How can I feed back my views?

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

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

School details

Unique reference number	101694
DfE registration number	305/6075
Local authority	Bromley
Inspection number	10115240
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	91
Proprietor	Patricia Ash
Headteacher	Patricia Ash
Annual fees (day pupils)	£9,300
Telephone number	0208 460 4143
Website	http://www.ashgrove.org.uk/
Email address	enquiries@ashgrove.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–25 January 2018

Information about this school

- Ashgrove School Ltd is a small independent primary school for boys and girls. The headteacher is also the proprietor.
- The school is located in a detached house. Pupils access local facilities for sports.
- The school provides before- and after-school clubs.
- The school's last inspection was in January 2018.
- There are no pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- We met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- We met with a range of teachers, staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and computing. We visited lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils, and reviewed pupils' work.
- We carried out a range of activities to look at safeguarding. These activities included talking to leaders, staff, parents and pupils. We reviewed a range of school documents and records.
- We visited other lessons across the curriculum, including art, humanities, music and PSHE. We reviewed a wide range of subject plans and pupils' work.
- We spoke to a member of staff from the London Borough of Bromley to discuss the school's approach to safeguarding.
- We had a tour of the premises and reviewed additional information in relation to the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Sam Hainey, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Frances Hawkes

Ofsted Inspector

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