

Inspection of Austin Farm Academy

Delamere Road, Egguckland, Plymouth, Devon PL6 5XQ

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff's expectations are too low. Pupils are not learning the critical knowledge they need. Consequently, they are not able to remember and build on prior learning in many subjects. Teachers provide activities but not a carefully thought-out curriculum. This happens from Reception to Year 6.

The headteacher does not monitor the impact of staff's work or hold staff to account. Therefore, planning and teaching are haphazard. There is no cohesion between what pupils learn from one year to the next. Pupils are not prepared adequately for their next steps in education. Equally, they are not developing as individuals with a clear understanding of equality and diversity as it exists in the modern world.

Pupils attend regularly and enjoy coming to school. Pupils are well behaved and are respectful to staff. There is very little bullying and, when it does occur, staff deal with it swiftly and efficiently. However, procedures to keep pupils safe are not effective.

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

In the majority of subjects, curriculum plans are not written. Furthermore, leaders have not ensured that subject leaders have received sufficient training to lead their areas of responsibility. Where this is the case, the teaching of the curriculum is superficial, sporadic and lacks any depth. Pupils are, therefore, not developing age-appropriate knowledge and understanding. Even when pupils have opportunities to discuss topics, they do not have enough knowledge to express their views on what they have learned.

However, the curriculums in subjects such as phonics, mathematics and physical education (PE) are coherent and support pupils in reading, calculating and becoming adept in PE skills and exercise.

Pupils learn to recognise letters and the sounds they represent in Reception and key stage 1. Books match the sounds they are learning. However, weaknesses in teaching, and delays in training staff, mean that pupils' skills in reading do not develop as well as they could. This hampers their writing and spelling ability too. Older pupils do not receive any guidance on what books are suitable for them to read. As a result, some pupils choose reading books that are not matched well to their reading ability.

Assessment is not effective. Leaders do not routinely assess what pupils have learned. There is little attempt to correct pupils' misconceptions immediately, so most pupils continue with an incorrect understanding of what they are learning.

Routines and systems in Reception are more effective. Children learn quickly how to behave and get ready for learning. Leaders have not included Reception in the

developing subject plans. This means that plans do not take into account what pupils already know before they begin Year 1. The early years leader is introducing relevant vocabulary to children but is having to work, too often, in a vacuum.

Disruption in learning is rare. However, pupils' attention wanes because teachers offer low-level activities instead of considered teaching of concepts that build towards an understanding of a subject in depth.

Leaders have not had a curriculum in place to support pupils to develop their personal, social and emotional skills until the past few months. As yet, it does not cater for the specific needs of pupils within the school. Staff are not trained in delivering sensitive material, so pupils are not receiving an education that prepares them to be citizens of the 21st century.

Too few reasonable adjustments happen for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, many of these pupils are not achieving their potential. For disadvantaged pupils, the gaps with their peers are widening. This is because leaders are not planning strategically and with enough detail on what these pupils need.

Accountability through local governance is unclear and ineffective currently. There is no agreed local governing body. This is because of the transference from one sponsoring multi-academy trust to another. Trust leaders have undertaken a review of the school's education. Their findings are accurate and they are putting subject training and leadership support in place swiftly to make the improvements necessary.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. The processes for checking the recruitment of staff are weak.

At the time of the inspection, too many weaknesses identified in a health and safety audit commissioned by leaders had not been resolved. Consequently, hazards on the site remained. No risk assessments were in place to mitigate the potential dangers.

Staff know of the latest safeguarding updates from the Department for Education. The safeguarding lead makes sure that the most vulnerable pupils are safe. He escalates issues when he feels the local authority is not taking suitable action.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have failed to plan strategically. As a result, evaluation of actions is not frequent or sharp enough. This has had an impact on curriculum planning, teaching standards, training, pupils' development and safeguarding. Leaders must provide a suitable accountability structure so that the current situation of decline is halted quickly.
- Safeguarding is ineffective. Leaders need to ensure that there is a robust culture of safeguarding established, including procedures for recruiting staff.
- Pupils are not learning at an age-appropriate standard in many subjects. Leaders have failed to put subject curriculums in place for most subjects. Leaders must rectify this situation with urgency, so pupils receive their curriculum entitlement.
- Staff expectations are too low. They fail to build on prior learning, correct misconceptions quickly and provide subject knowledge with any depth. Leaders are not monitoring what is happening within learning, so the weak practice continues. Senior leaders should provide subject leaders with sufficient training to monitor and improve teaching immediately.
- The curriculum for personal development does not provide specific and appropriate learning about the protected characteristics, fundamental British values, and an awareness of faith and tolerance that will support pupils as they mature and develop into young citizens. Staff have not received training to deliver these aspects. Training must be provided and the curriculum amended with urgency.
- Staff do not use assessment effectively. Knowledge about how pupils are progressing within the school curriculum is not available. Therefore, changes needed to ensure the curriculum plans are supporting the correct sequencing of learning are not made. Assessment processes that are fit for purpose need to be put in place swiftly.
- Having considered the evidence, it is strongly recommended that leaders and those responsible for governance do not seek to appoint early career teachers.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	141232
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	10200963
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	155
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Iain Grafton
Headteacher	Colin Randall
Website	www.austinfarm.plymouth.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is sponsored by West Country Schools Trust. The change from the previous trust was confirmed on 1 July 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative education providers.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with the trust's director of primary education.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and listened to them read, and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector looked at recruitment practices and checks. In addition, the lead inspector spoke with the designated safeguarding lead. Inspectors spoke with staff about their training in safeguarding and spoke to pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with the special educational needs coordinator, the head of early years and different groups of pupils to discuss personal development.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses, and the staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Kathy Maddocks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sally Hannaford

Ofsted Inspector

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