

Inspection of Ashford Hill Primary School

Ashford Hill Road, Ashford Hill, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 8BB

Inspection dates: 10 to 12 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small, welcoming school. They are polite and respectful to each other and to staff and visitors. Pupils attend well and most have positive attitudes to their learning, following the school's motto: 'Be the best we can be'. Pupils are confident to ask for help when they need it during lessons.

Despite this, staff do not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils' attitudes towards their learning. This means that too many pupils lack focus and do not take enough pride in their work. This often goes unnoticed by staff. As a result, pupils do not reach their full potential.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection said that they feel happy and safe at Ashford Hill. They say that bullying is very rare and that pupils are kind to each other. Most know who to go to if they have concerns, but some say they do not have a trusted adult they can talk to. Staff and leaders do not consistently recognise the concerns about pupils' welfare that could be indicators of something more serious. Consequently, staff and leaders do not meet their safeguarding duties.

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

There have been changes in the leadership of the school over the last year. The school is currently led by an interim headteacher who took up her post in September 2021. The interim headteacher quickly reviewed the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. This means that she has an accurate view of the school. As a result, she has already begun to make important changes.

Governors have provided challenge and support to leaders over time. However, they have not had a sharp enough focus on safeguarding or the curriculum. They have accepted too much of what leaders have told them without question. This means that they have not identified quickly what it is that needs to be prioritised for improvement.

Weaknesses in the school's phonics programme were identified when the interim headteacher started at the school. Consequently, she introduced a new phonics programme. Training provided to all staff means that they now have a better understanding of how to teach phonics. Staff have spent time ensuring that the books pupils read match the sounds they learn. Pupils are now making more progress with reading because of these changes. Regular checks on pupils' phonics mean that those who fall behind are identified and can receive the support they need to catch up.

The mathematics curriculum is in an earlier stage of development. Leaders are working closely with the local authority to improve it further. The curriculum clearly identifies what pupils will learn and when. However, the pandemic and the changes

in leadership mean that developments in mathematics are not as far forward as leaders would have liked.

Leaders know that many other subjects need further development. Curriculum planning lacks precision and this means that teachers do not have enough information to ensure that pupils make the progress they are capable of. Leaders have identified the broad skills and knowledge they want pupils to have. However, they have not thought carefully enough about the more detailed elements they want pupils to understand in order to grasp the larger areas.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified quickly and support is provided. Personalised learning plans help staff to support pupils in lessons. These plans identify the help each pupil needs. The special educational needs coordinator monitors each plan. However, leaders are aware that this monitoring could be strengthened to check more clearly that the support given is making the required impact.

Children get off to a good start in the early years. They begin to learn to read as soon as they start school. They learn to use numbers and do so confidently. Staff communicate with children as much as possible. This leads to children having a deep understanding of many topics. For example, children excitedly told the lead inspector all they knew about London, including facts about Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Staff have high expectations of these children and they make good progress. As a result, they are prepared well for key stage 1.

Pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. A well-planned personal, social, health and economic programme gives pupils the knowledge and understanding they need as they move through the school. This also helps to prepare pupils as they move on at the end of Year 6. Pupils take part in music and sports clubs. Pupil leadership is important at the school. Pupils who become 'head pupils' proudly lead weekly assemblies celebrating the achievements of others.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Staff do not understand how to keep pupils safe. Systems and processes for recording concerns about pupils, and actions taken, are poor. Staff do not always recognise indicators that could suggest a pupil needs help. Staff do not routinely share concerns about pupils with leaders. When concerns are shared, leaders do not always identify patterns because they do not have a clear oversight of each pupil. Consequently, leaders do not always escalate concerns to external agencies when they should, nor do they sufficiently document the progress of referrals made. The interim headteacher has begun to tackle some of these weaknesses. However, she knows that there is still much to do.

Governors' oversight of safeguarding lacks rigour. They have not checked carefully enough that the systems in place to safeguard pupils are being followed. They have

not challenged leaders sufficiently to ensure that staff and leaders meet their safeguarding duties.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective. This means that pupils are at risk. Leaders need to make sure that all staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff need to be more alert to pupils' welfare concerns and how these should be recorded and escalated. Leaders should ensure that record-keeping is accurate and that the actions taken are recorded clearly. Leaders need to ensure that referrals to external agencies are made in a timely manner and that the progress of each of these referrals is carefully monitored.
- Governors do not have an accurate view of the school, particularly safeguarding. Staff and leaders do not meet their safeguarding duties. Governors need to ensure that they challenge leaders more robustly, carefully record their actions and monitor these for impact.
- In several foundation subjects, curriculum planning is not thought out well enough. Leaders do not identify precisely enough the knowledge and skills pupils should learn and in what order. This means that pupils do not make the progress they could. Leaders need to review the foundation subjects so that they are consistently well planned and well sequenced.
- Staff do not have consistently high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. This means that too many pupils lack focus and do not learn as well as they could. Staff do not act quickly enough. Leaders need to raise the expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning, and ensure that these expectations are commonly understood and applied by staff.

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

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| Unique reference number | 115921 |
| Local authority | Hampshire |
| Inspection number | 10211094 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 138 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Mark Larby |
| Headteacher | Sharon Pole (interim headteacher) |
| Website | www.ashfordhillprimary.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 14 December 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is currently led by an interim headteacher.
- The substantive headteacher recently left the school.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act. The initial inspection under section 8 and the final section 5 inspection were led by different inspectors.

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. They discussed the curriculum with leaders, staff and pupils, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read.
- Inspectors met with the interim headteacher, other school leaders, staff, pupils and those with responsibility for governance, including the chair of the governing body and the governor responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors visited the early years provision.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors scrutinised the school's self-evaluation and school development plan.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the local authority and also looked at records of local authority visits to the school.
- Inspectors met with leaders to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and comments made by those who responded. They also considered correspondence from parents alongside other evidence.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with designated safeguarding leaders and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with governors. Inspectors scrutinised a selection of child protection records, both electronically and in paper format. They scrutinised a range of other safeguarding paperwork.

Inspection team

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|---|-------------------------|
| Shaun Jarvis, lead inspector (12 November 2021) | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Jon Hills | Ofsted Inspector |
| Lea Hannam, lead inspector (10 November 2021) | Ofsted Inspector |

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