

# Inspection of Ashtree Primary School and Nursery

Chertsey Rise, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG2 9JQ

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Inspection dates: 8 and 9 December 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Ashtree Primary School enjoy attending school. Pupils feel safe. They say that teachers are highly visible around the school and accessible to them. This reassures pupils that they can talk to adults easily if there are problems that they cannot solve themselves. Pupils feel safe from bullying. They understand what bullying is and when to ask for help. Pupils behave well in lessons and at less structured times of the day. They listen to their teachers and to each other. They are respectful and responsible.

However, pupils' progress is hindered because there are weaknesses in the reading curriculum. Pupils who need additional help are not supported effectively to catch up quickly. In addition, in too many subjects curriculum plans do not help pupils learn and remember the important knowledge that they need to.

Pupils enjoy the opportunities that the school gives them through the school council to have a voice in school life. They appreciate that their successes outside of school are celebrated publicly through the school newsletter.

Most parents who shared their views responded positively about the school. One parent's comments were typical of most, when they said, 'Every teacher has been approachable and supportive,' and 'I would recommend the school very highly.'

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

In a few subjects, such as mathematics, leaders have developed a curriculum that provides pupils with a sequence of learning so they can achieve well. This helps pupils build knowledge over time and become confident and fluent in calculations and other aspects of mathematics. Pupils use correct mathematical vocabulary and can talk about their previous learning and how it has helped them with new learning. As a result, pupils enjoy their mathematics learning and achieve well.

However, in several subjects, leaders have not been clear in their curriculum thinking about what they want pupils to know in each year group. Teachers do not know what content and vocabulary must be covered. As a result, teaching does not build on what pupils already know. Pupils do not gain a secure understanding of each curriculum subject being taught. The weakness in curriculum thinking and teaching is also evident in the early years. Leaders have not given enough thought to the specific knowledge that they want children to leave the early years with so that they can be successful in Year 1. As a result, children are not making the progress of which they are capable in the curriculum.

The reading curriculum is developed so that teachers are clear about what they should teach and when. In phonics, there are clear, sequenced plans for staff to follow. Staff have ongoing training in how to support pupils and in how to teach the reading curriculum. However, the books that pupils read are not routinely matched to the sounds pupils know. As a result, some pupils struggle to read and lose

confidence and enjoyment in reading. When these pupils fall behind the expectations that the school has set in reading, pupils do not routinely catch up quickly enough.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive appropriate support. Their needs are accurately identified and their targets reviewed regularly to help them access the same curriculum as their peers. As a result, pupils with SEND are supported well to be successful in all areas of the curriculum.

Pupils are positive about their school. This is because pupils' personal development is well planned and developed. Pupils are offered a range of clubs and sports to take part in. They can share their achievements from outside school and enjoy the opportunity to have a voice in what happens in school. The curriculum supports pupils to show positive social behaviours when working together and this helps establish a calm working environment for pupils.

Teachers are appreciative of the role that leaders take in managing their workload and say that there is a supportive and understanding attitude from leaders and other staff when there are busy periods.

The new leadership team is ambitious to improve the school. Leaders, including governors, are working closely with the local authority to ensure that the school considers and acts upon the main priorities that will improve the quality of education.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders work effectively with families to support them. Where needed, leaders provide additional support to ensure that pupils receive appropriate help. This includes timely work with external agencies where needed.

Leaders analyse behaviour and safeguarding records so that they can provide additional training for staff to help pupils further. The single central record of staff, which provides leaders with reassurance that all pre-employment checks are made, is well maintained. All appropriate checks are made.

The content of the curriculum ensures that pupils know how to stay safe, including when working online.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum thinking is not precise enough to ensure that teaching builds on pupils' previous knowledge. As a result, pupils are not building sufficient knowledge or developing appropriate vocabulary over time in some subjects. Leaders must ensure that all their curriculum thinking is understood, carefully sequenced and precise, so that teachers know what they must teach and so that pupils' knowledge and skills build on what they already know.
- The early years curriculum does not clearly define what leaders want children to know in each area of learning, and so some learning is missed. This means that some children do not learn what they need to be ready for Year 1. Leaders must ensure that there is clarity in what children need to learn in early years so that this can be successfully built upon in Year 1.
- Leaders have not ensured that the books that some pupils read are well matched to the knowledge pupils have. As a result, some pupils fall behind and are not supported to catch up quickly enough. Leaders must ensure that books are matched to the letters and sounds that pupils know, so that pupils, particularly those who fall behind, confidently learn to read quickly.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117352
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200516
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	391
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	William Spicer
<b>Headteacher</b>	Maria Janes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.ashtree.herts.sch.uk">www.ashtree.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	16 and 17 January 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Ashtree Primary School and Nursery has undergone significant change since the last inspection and a newly appointed leadership team has been in place since January 2021.
- The school runs a breakfast club.
- The proportion of pupils who are in receipt of free school meals is slightly higher than national averages.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is slightly higher than national averages.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is lower than national averages.

## 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the school’s leadership team, and other leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, the early years leader and the assessment leader. Inspectors also met with members of the governing body.
- Inspectors did deep dives in these subjects: reading; mathematics; personal, social, health and economic education; art; and science. For each deep dive, inspectors spoke with curriculum leaders, visited lessons where possible, spoke with pupils, looked at curriculum plans, and looked at pupils’ books with leaders. Inspectors also spoke with teaching staff and listened to pupils reading to the adults in school.
- Inspectors considered the 33 responses from parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire, and the 14 free-text comments. There were no responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey nor Ofsted’s online pupil survey.

### **Inspection team**

Debbie Rogan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Sim	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

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