

Inspection of a good school: Anstey First School

Anstey, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0BY

Inspection date: 20 January 2022

Outcome

Anstey First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Anstey First School is a very small school and a caring community. Pupils enjoy very positive relationships with staff. Pupils feel safe and happy. As a result, they develop confidence and independence.

Pupils behave well. They show their enjoyment and engagement in learning. Outside of lessons, pupils play very happily. Clear routines teach them to act with respect. Pupils say there is very little bullying. Parents and staff agree with this. If there are minor incidents, staff resolve these, so they do not recur.

Pupils enjoy the school environment. They learn about risks and are encouraged to be adventurous while still staying safe. For example, they describe with enthusiasm what they learn from their lessons in the local woods, such as about map reading and different types of rocks. Children play and learn with purpose in the early years environment. Pupils rise to the challenge of the high expectations leaders have for what they will learn. Pupils talk passionately about what they know, such as a group of girls telling inspectors why they want to be scientists when they grow up.

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

Leaders have put in place an ambitious and well-considered curriculum. Leaders' curriculum thinking details and identifies the most important knowledge pupils should learn. Leaders ensure this builds on from what pupils already know. Consequently, pupils are ready for their next stage of learning, and they achieve well across the curriculum.

In a few subjects, including art and music, planning what pupils should learn is less thorough. Leaders plan how pupils' practical skills should develop over time. However, they plan theoretical knowledge, such as what pupils should know about artists, less carefully. Because of this, pupils do not achieve as highly in these subjects as they do in subjects such as English, science and mathematics.

Assessment is used well. Teachers check pupils' learning well and correct misconceptions straight away. Teachers have identified gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding that have come about because of the upheaval caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, some children in the early years have needed additional support and time spent developing a correct pencil grip.

Teachers are knowledgeable and well trained. They teach the curriculum effectively. For example, teachers recap regularly what pupils have been taught. Consequently, pupils remember and build up their knowledge well. Pupils use what they know with confidence, such as applying mathematical or scientific vocabulary in appropriate contexts.

Staff plan and deliver the curriculum well in the early years. Adults capably use resources to support children's learning. Staff ensure that conversations with children build their learning and social skills. As a result, children in the early years rapidly develop what they know and can do. For example, children learn how to ask different types of questions, or link together separate ideas.

Leaders prioritise reading. They have recently introduced a new phonics programme. Staff teach this confidently. Leaders check when pupils fall behind and ensure they are given the right support to catch up quickly. Leaders ensure that pupils read books that match the sounds they have learned. Consequently, pupils quickly learn to read with fluency. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders in all year groups create a love of reading. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about the books they read.

Pupils with SEND receive effective support. Teachers track the learning of these pupils closely. For instance, they check how well pupils with SEND remember the most important vocabulary in different subjects. Teachers plan carefully so they adjust the learning where needed. Leaders engage effectively with parents. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers and achieve well.

Leaders are knowledgeable about helping pupils with their mental health and well-being. This includes pupils with additional needs, who staff have supported well while emerging from the pandemic. Leaders skilfully teach pupils how to manage their feelings and develop their resilience. This also helps pupils behave well and concentrate in lessons.

Leaders ensure that pupils receive a range of opportunities for personal development. Pupils value the wider activities, whether sport, yoga, coding or 'fun club'.

Governors have the skills they need for their roles. They know the school well. Governors understand the curriculum. They monitor leaders' work on it closely. Governors have supported leaders successfully, such as in improving the learning environment in the early years.

Leaders consistently consider staff's workload. Staff say this improves their well-being. They appreciate the collaborative culture of the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is vigilant leadership of safeguarding. Staff are well trained and knowledgeable about keeping children safe. Leaders support vulnerable pupils well, in part through knowing and supporting their families. Leaders keep thorough records of safeguarding cases and concerns. They take timely and appropriate actions where needed. When they liaise with agencies, they persevere with this until they have made sure children have got the help they need.

Leaders teach pupils how to stay safe, such as teaching them skilfully about healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few areas of the curriculum, leaders do not identify some of the subject-specific knowledge that pupils must learn. This means that, although pupils achieve well, they do not remember as much of what they learn as they should. Leaders must ensure that they plan all parts of the curriculum well so that pupils make consistently good progress throughout the whole curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2016.

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	117218
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10193968
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	52
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tom Sealy
Headteacher	Amy Myers
Website	www.anstey.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 January 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Anstey First School is much smaller than the average size for primary schools.
- The school has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with SEND.

Information about this inspection

- 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 held meetings with senior leaders, other leaders, staff, pupils and governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documents, including the school improvement plan and school policies.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their

learning and looked at samples of pupils' work, which in early reading took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also considered other subjects, particularly art. To do this, they met with the art leader, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks. They considered the school's safeguarding policy and procedures. They spoke to leaders, staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors reviewed the 21 responses to Ofsted Parent View and 21 free-text comments. In addition to this, inspectors spoke to parents at the school gate. Inspectors also considered the 11 responses to the staff survey and the 21 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Stefanie Lipinski-Barltrop

Her Majesty's Inspector

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