

Inspection of a good school: Ashfield Junior School

School Lane, Bushey, Hertfordshire WD23 1SR

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Ashfield Junior School have many aspirations, such as becoming a journalist, a pianist or a zoologist. They share these aims confidently with adults. They know what steps they must take to achieve their 'north star' aspirations. Many aspects of the school's curriculum, particularly the reading and mathematics programmes, help pupils achieve these. However, the support that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive, as well as some of the misguided activities that all pupils complete for some subjects, are not setting up all pupils for success.

Pupils are charming, friendly and polite. Still, pupils shared that some pupils' behaviour can disrupt their learning. A minority of pupils' parents echoed these concerns. Pupils need staff to have a clear, consistent approach to how all pupils' behaviour is managed.

Pupils know what bullying is, but said that it seldom occurs at their school. They know they can call upon their five trusted adults to help, were they to have a concern. This ensures that pupils feel safe and happy at their school.

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

Support for pupils with SEND lacks rigour. Although leaders seek support from external agencies, they do not use this well to inform the in-school support for pupils with SEND. The targets on plans are not always measurable. As a result, staff cannot know if a pupil requires a more ambitious target or further support. At times, how leaders and staff evaluate the support relies on subjective opinion. Leaders cannot be assured that their systems are ensuring all pupils with SEND achieve their best.

Many pupils behave kindly and safely. Some staff said that they use rewards to encourage the right behaviour, while others said that they expect pupils to behave well without rewards. Inconsistencies like these mean that pupils do not know the expectations. Some

behave in a way that distracts their peers from learning. Leaders are exploring this, but changes have yet to take effect.

Leaders recognise the importance of setting out the knowledge pupils must learn, along with shared approaches to assessment. For some subjects, teachers receive effective training and support. This helps them to teach concepts clearly, plan suitable activities and assess pupils accurately. In other subjects, teachers deviate from curriculum plans and organise activities that do not match the curriculum aims. These activities sometimes lack clarity or ambition, and hinder pupils' achievement.

The reading programme is well considered. Leaders have trained teachers well. Teachers use leaders' curriculum plans to good effect. Through carefully planned activities, pupils learn how to comprehend a wide range of texts. These include non-fiction and poetry texts that complement pupils' learning in the wider curriculum. Well-trained teaching assistants provide helpful guidance for those pupils who find reading difficult. Pupils learn to read confidently and fluently.

Leaders value pupils' wider development. Through assemblies, lessons, school trips and special visitors, pupils learn about different people and communities. Discussions with pupils demonstrate that they have a mature understanding of the similarities and differences among people. In this way, pupils are being prepared well for life in modern Britain.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, along with a wide range of extra-curricular activities, there were a range of roles which enabled pupils to effect change in their school. Pupils are looking forward to staff reintroducing these and others soon. These roles include the buddy system to support those pupils joining Year 3, and peer mediators to resolve minor pupil disputes. Currently, with clubs, leaders are prioritising sports to encourage lots of exercise. Shortly, this offering will be expanded to include clubs that were on offer prior to the pandemic, such as the popular art and chess clubs.

Governors, including the recently appointed headteacher, evaluate the school accurately. They are aware of what is working well and what must improve. They consider the implications of school practices on staff workload fairly. Staff report very positively on their relationships with leaders. Most parents report positively on the school's work, particularly more recent changes to how information is shared.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that provision for pupils with SEND, how activities support pupils' learning, and pupils' behaviour may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders organise training that helps staff to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff speak confidently about their role in keeping pupils safe. Staff know how to report their concerns. Leaders act on staff concerns quickly and effectively. They liaise appropriately with parents and external agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Pupils talk well about how to stay safe on- and offline. They know how to share their concerns verbally, or in writing via the 'worry box', so that a trusted adult can help them.

Leaders, including governors, ensure that those appointed to work or volunteer in the school receive checks to confirm they are safe to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The systems for supporting pupils with SEND lack rigour. Not all teachers set clear, measurable targets, and so it becomes difficult for staff overseeing support to know what progress a pupil has made. Leaders must evaluate and improve their systems, training staff accordingly to ensure a rigorous, timely approach to setting and reviewing support for pupils with SEND.
- In some subjects, teachers do not plan activities that help pupils to learn the knowledge set out in curriculum plans. These pupils find it difficult to recall knowledge where concepts have not been learned clearly. Leaders must support teachers to ensure that the activities pupils complete are closely aligned to the aims of the curriculum.
- There are not shared systems for managing pupils' behaviour that are understood by all staff and pupils. The inconsistency means that some pupils' learning is affected by the behaviour of other pupils. Leaders must train staff to teach all pupils how to behave well.

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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

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	117391
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10211393
Type of school	Junior
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Chris Holt
Headteacher	Andre Dourado
Website	www.ashfield.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in January 2022.
- The school uses the services of one alternative education provider. The provider is registered with the school where its executive headteacher is based.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, key stage leader, special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, three governors and a Hertfordshire Improvement Partner working on behalf of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and deputy designated safeguarding lead to review records. The inspector also met with the office manager to scrutinise the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks. The inspector spoke with governors, teachers and pupils as well.
- The inspector reviewed a range of other school documentation and policies, including the school development plan and records of meetings.
- The inspector spent time observing and speaking to pupils. The inspector also considered the five responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- The inspector gathered parents' views by reviewing the 60 responses and 43 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. The inspector also took account of the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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