

Inspection of a good school: Amery Hill School

Amery Hill, Alton, Hampshire GU34 2BZ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 February 2022

Outcome

Amery Hill School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend Amery Hill and are successful here. Their accomplishments are regularly rewarded and celebrated. Pupils wear their achievement and ambassador badges with pride. One pupil told inspectors, 'It is cool to be clever here.' A safe and respectful culture permeates the school. Pupils hold the door open for each other and greet each other cheerfully. They recognise and celebrate diversity.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils. The 'iCare' system encourages pupils to demonstrate independence, creativity, being active, resilience and empathy. Pupils relish the opportunity to apply these core attributes in all subjects. Pupils behave well in class and rarely distract the learning of others. Relationships between pupils and adults are strong. Pupils know there are staff at the school who would listen to them and help them if needed. Pupils recognise that sometimes friendship problems occur but say that bullying is rare.

Pupils relish the range of opportunities to take on extra responsibility. There is a plethora of extra-curricular clubs that they can choose to attend, ranging from running club before school to training to be a librarian or joining eco-club. Many opportunities exist to represent the school in sports and there is a thriving school orchestra.

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

Pupils study a broad curriculum in Year 7 and Year 8. Year 9 acts as a 'transition year' or accelerated preparation for key stage 4. For example, in modern foreign languages pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding of their chosen language before starting Year 10. The key stage 4 curriculum is varied, and leaders have an aspiration to increase the number of pupils who gain qualifications in the English Baccalaureate. Growing numbers of pupils are being encouraged to study modern foreign languages at key stage 4 to address this. Curriculum adjustments take into account the impact of the pandemic, with regular and timely interventions supporting those who have fallen behind.

Specialist teachers present lessons in a way which helps pupils know more and remember more. A small minority of teachers do not share the same ambition for less-able pupils across all subjects. Less effective use of assessment seen by inspectors in some lessons means pupils are not always aware of the specific areas they need to focus on to improve their work.

Remote lessons during the pandemic were swiftly tailored to the needs of the pupils. Staff were innovative when using blended learning. Where necessary, support is being given to pupils to enable them to settle back into school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and disadvantaged pupils are actively engaged in all aspects of school life. Teachers support less-able pupils effectively so they quickly catch up on any work they find challenging.

Plans to help pupils read fluently are sophisticated, and the vibrant library is well resourced. Skilled staff work with those who find reading challenging or who are behind in reading skills, and they are making considerable progress as a result.

Personal development of pupils is prioritised. Education for life (EFL) encompasses a wide range of activities carefully designed to teach personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE). Pupils learn about democracy and can represent their tutor group in the school parliament as a student ambassador. Pupils support each other with peer mentoring. There is more work to do to help pupils understand the difference between isolated friendship problems and bullying. The recently launched house system engages pupils well. It is already a popular feature of daily school life. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. They receive detailed careers information, advice and guidance.

There is a strong culture of care. One parent told inspectors, 'The pastoral care at the school is excellent. My child's head of year goes above and beyond to respond and support any issue raised.'

Diligent trustees make sure that the school is effectively led and managed. Parents are positive about the school. Staff are proud to work here. Leaders balance staff well-being with a focus on improving standards for pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including governors, are careful in how they oversee safeguarding arrangements. Staff receive detailed and timely training on how to spot and respond to potential issues. They understand the school's processes for reporting concerns. Leaders ensure that any necessary follow-up is appropriate and thorough. The safeguarding team meets regularly and crafts individual responses to pupils' needs. Occasionally leaders' checks on alternative provision are not robust and systematic.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. EFL lessons teach pupils how to keep themselves safe online. Assemblies and visiting speakers enhance this provision.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders recognise that the curriculum in some subjects is not yet embedded securely and consistently. This means that in some subjects lessons are not sequenced sufficiently or effectively to enable pupils' learning to build on prior knowledge. Leaders need to focus their curriculum development work on ensuring that lesson activities closely reflect the intended plans in all subjects.
- Some pupils do not understand fully what type of behaviour is defined as bullying or how this is addressed by the school. As a result, not all pupils are as confident and clear as they need to be in the school's processes. Leaders and staff need to take further steps to ensure that all pupils have a stronger understanding of what constitutes bullying and the school's response to it.

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 December 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	137535
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10211386
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	963
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Lorna Vickery
Headteacher	Stephen Mann
Website	www.ameryhill.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 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 of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders of the school, members of staff, pupils and parents. Inspectors also met with trustees and the local authority improvement officer (by telephone).
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, science, modern foreign languages and history. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed a wide range of safeguarding documents and records, including the school's record of recruitment checks. Inspectors also talked to a range of staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff, pupils and parents to gather their views. They considered 259 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 149 free-text comments. Inspectors also took account of 84 responses to the staff survey and 177 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Linda Culling, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Peter Rodin

Ofsted Inspector

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