

Inspection of a good school: Ashwell Primary School

Silver Street, Ashwell, Baldock, Hertfordshire SG7 5QL

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 May 2022

Outcome

Ashwell Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning. At the same time, teachers make lessons engaging and fun. Pupils feel involved in their learning and achieve well.

Pupils sing songs, regularly discuss their ideas and read out loud to the class. This develops their confidence to speak publicly and to be able to express themselves.

Pupils are never far from a book. They talk with enthusiasm about what they are reading. By the time they get into key stage 2, most pupils can read with confidence.

Pupils want to learn. They are enthusiastic to join in with lessons. As a result, any disruption to their learning is extremely rare. Pupils feel safe and nurtured at the school. They treat each other with respect and tolerance.

Pupils get a wide range of additional experiences through clubs and trips. There is something to meet everyone's interests, so that pupils can pursue their interests and passions fully.

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

At Ashwell Primary School, careful thought has been given to the knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. These are identified in leaders' new curriculum plans. Clear links are made between new and previous learning, leading towards clearly identified end points. The curriculum takes account of the local context. It includes a variety of enrichment experiences to broaden pupils' horizons beyond the village.

Some subjects are at an advanced stage with the implementation of leaders' new plans. For example, in mathematics, teachers have been well trained and have a shared understanding of the school's approach and what excellence looks like. As a result, staff match provision carefully to meet the needs of all pupils. They use assessment carefully to check what pupils have learned in each lesson. As result, pupils enjoy mathematics as

they are either provided with additional challenge to extend them, or the support they need to secure their understanding before moving on.

There are new curriculum plans in other subjects too. These are often taught well by teachers who have the expertise to adapt and use the plans to good effect, such as pupils being guided expertly to understand chronology and put what they are taught into historical context. However, sometimes teachers do not have this same level of expertise. They follow leaders' curriculum plans and pupils cover the required content, but not in as much depth.

By the time pupils get into key stage 2 they read with confidence. Children secure a strong foundation in phonics from Nursery. Staff have appropriate expertise to help pupils learn to read. The weakest readers are well supported. Provision is carefully tailored for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders ensure that pupils have access to a wide variety of texts. They promote a love of reading well. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic about reading. Staff usually match texts well to pupils' reading ability. However, on occasions, staff do not move all pupils onto more difficult books as quickly as they should.

Pupils are enthusiastic to participate in learning. As a result, they behave well in lessons. A nurturing and restorative approach to behaviour has been firmly embedded at the school. Because of this, pupils are able to self-regulate in unstructured times. They share and interact with each other with tolerance and respect. Pupils with SEND receive teaching and support that is adapted to meet their needs. As a result they are fully included in lessons.

Pupils learn about personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education (RSE) in an age-appropriate way. Pupils learn this information securely. Connections are made with other areas of the curriculum to build on previous learning. For example, pupils learn about changes to the body and puberty in science before learning about relationships in RSE.

Leaders are mindful of the well-being of staff. They have established a mutually supportive culture where staff feel they are listened to and function as one supportive team.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders' systems ensure the single central record of vetting and recruitment checks meets statutory requirements. Governors are fully involved in holding leaders to account.

Leaders ensure that all staff have up-to-date safeguarding training. This is supplemented by regular updates throughout the year. This ensures staff have awareness of any new issues or risks that may come up.

Pupils are confident to talk to adults if they have a worry as a nurturing culture has been established at the school. Staff work hard to develop relationships with families and access support for them where appropriate.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have expertise across all the subjects they teach. This means pupils are not taught all subjects to the same depth. Leaders should provide training for teachers to ensure they all have the expertise they need to teach the range of subjects well.
- A minority of pupils spend too long on the same level of book. As a result, these pupils are not fully challenged with what they are reading and their progress with developing reading is not as rapid as it could be. Leaders need to make sure reading books and texts provide all pupils with a well-matched level of challenge.

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 third section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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	117084
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10200345
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Diane Jacoutot
Headteacher	Simon England
Website	www.ashwell.herts.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since the last monitoring visit.
- Since the previous short inspection the school has become one form entry.
- The school currently has no pupils who attend alternative provision.

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 carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector also visited computing and physical education lessons.
- The inspector met with school leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator, local governors and a representative from the local authority.

- The inspector met with parents on the school playground.
- The inspector explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to the designated safeguarding leads.
- The inspector considered the 103 responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including 62 free-text responses. He also considered the 18 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and the 74 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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M1 2WD

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