

Inspection of a good school: Acomb Primary School

West Bank, York, North Yorkshire YO24 4ES

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 May 2022

Outcome

Acomb Primary School continues to be a good school. There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a section 5 inspection now. The school's next inspection will be a section 5 inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school motto, 'Putting Children First - Always Aiming High' permeates Acomb Primary School. Pupils work hard and meet the high expectations that staff have for them. This helps pupils to achieve well in a variety of subjects.

Pupils' behaviour is delightful. They are polite and kind to each other. Bullying is rare and pupils are safe. Pupils are confident that, should bullying occur, it will be sorted out quickly by staff. Parents and carers speak very highly of the school.

Year 6 pupils develop their sense of responsibility as buddies to children in the early years. They also play an active role in recruiting new members of staff. Pupils are proud to sit on the school council. They make a positive contribution to environmental issues.

Pupils are happy and well cared for. They attend a range of different activities, such as girls' football, yoga and the Earth club. The curriculum is enhanced by the Acomb Acorns programme which promotes a wide range of opportunities and experiences.

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Subject champions lead their areas of responsibility with passion and expertise. They have ensured that there is meaningful coverage of the national curriculum content in all subjects. Leaders have broken down challenging goals into smaller steps that build sequentially over time. This helps pupils to acquire the knowledge and develop the skills that they need for the next stage of their education.

Teachers use their assessment information to plan lessons that build on what pupils already know and can do. In mathematics, teachers ensure that all pupils master the basics before moving on. As a result, pupils make strong progress through the curriculum and achieve well. The work they produce in art, for example, is simply stunning. Staff provide effective support for pupils with SEND. Consequently, pupils access challenging curriculum content with confidence and success.

Leaders are determined that every pupil will learn to read fluently. The reading leader has developed a consistent approach to teaching phonics which begins immediately when children join the school. Pupils enjoy reading books that closely match the sounds that they know. This helps to improve their fluency and confidence. Leaders have ensured that staff are experts in teaching reading. Staff provide effective support for pupils who struggle to grasp new sounds. This means that pupils catch up quickly if they start to fall behind.

In the early years, staff develop pupils' mathematical vocabulary particularly well. Staff have ensured that pupils in Reception know how to hold a pencil and form their letters correctly. The impact of COVID-19 can be seen in Year 1 where this is not the case for all pupils.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Staff model high expectations. Pupils' expectations of each other are equally high. In lessons, pupils display strong attitudes to learning. At playtime, they enjoy each other's company and friendship.

Provision for pupils' wider development is a real strength of the school. Leaders are passionate about providing pupils with a rich programme of developmental experiences. For instance, a recent residential visit developed pupils' courage and increased their willingness to try new things. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the annual 'fiver challenge' to raise money for charity. Leaders promote pupils' understanding of British values such as respect and democracy. Pupils know what these mean and how to demonstrate them.

The school is well led. Leaders have pupils' best interests at the heart of every decision they make. Leaders and governors keep a careful eye on the workload of staff. Staff are proud to work at the school and hold leaders in very high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know their pupils and families well. They are alert to any signs that pupils may be at risk. Leaders provide timely support and seek specialist help when required. They make sure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in the wider community and online. For example, pupils learn about healthy relationships and understand the concept of consent.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training. As a result, everyone knows how to identify and report concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Robust procedures are in place to check that staff are suitable to work with pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- As a result of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, some pupils in Year 1 have not secured the correct pencil grip. A few have yet to master correct letter formation. This means that the foundations for neat and comfortable handwriting have not been securely laid for all pupils. Teachers should ensure that pupils learn how to hold their pencil and form their letters correctly so that they can write legibly and comfortably at length in later years.

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 predecessor school (Acomb Primary School) to be good in July 2014.

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	144265
Local authority	York
Inspection number	10227616
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Hattam
Headteacher	Lee Haynes
Website	www.acombprimary.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher is also the primary strategic lead for Pathfinder Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school offers before- and after-school provision.
- Leaders do not make use of any 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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, special educational needs coordinator, school business manager, acting chair of the local governing committee, chief executive officer and chair of the trust board.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject champions, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. She also listened to a small number of pupils read to an adult.

- The inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in these subjects: computing, physical education, history and religious education. She also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in the early years.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector observed pupils at break and lunchtime.
- The inspector considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and comments made by those who responded. She also considered the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted surveys.
- The inspector examined a range of policies and documents. She also scrutinised safeguarding information, including the school's safeguarding records and policy. The inspector spoke to designated safeguarding leads and talked to pupils and staff about their safety and welfare.

Inspection team

Jo Bentley, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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