

Inspection of Ashbourne Hilltop Primary and Nursery School

Wyaston Road, Ashbourne, Derbyshire DE6 1NB

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

A 'welcoming smile' greets pupils as they arrive at this inclusive school. Pupils say they feel safe because they know which adults to speak to should they have any worries or concerns. Parents and carers recognise the changes that are helping to improve the school. One parent, typical of many, said there is a 'genuine passion for improving the school, and making it a happy, exciting place for children to learn'.

The school's rules of 'ready, respectful, safe' are understood well by pupils. Any rare instances of bullying are dealt with quickly. Pupils enjoy the new equipment at lunchtime, with the 'Hilltop beach' being a particular favourite. However, although the new systems have improved behaviour, during social times, some pupils do not consistently uphold the high expectations set by adults.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have opportunities to take part in residential trips and after-school clubs alongside their peers. However, the targets on their personal plans do not always link closely to their development needs.

Children settle quickly into the early years. They follow routines and listen well to adult instructions. However, leaders have not considered in detail what children in the early years will learn.

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

The school has undergone significant changes in staffing and leadership. This has limited the progress the school has made. The current headteacher has swiftly introduced new curriculum approaches for most subject areas. This is raising expectations and helps pupils know more of the school's curriculum. However, the early years curriculum does not identify how children will build their knowledge in all areas of learning.

Leaders have ensured that all staff have received training to deliver the school's early reading programme. New reading books match the sounds pupils learn. The programme is delivered consistently across the school. Teachers regularly check the sounds pupils know and remember. This helps them to identify pupils who need extra support. Older pupils appreciate the books they receive linked to their reading preferences.

The mathematics curriculum is well embedded in some year groups. In these classes, adults help pupils to use their mathematical knowledge well. Leaders support all staff to develop their expertise in teaching mathematics using the school's approach.

Most subject leaders are new to their role of responsibility. They lack the necessary knowledge and expertise to drive the improvements needed in the school's curriculum. They have not made checks to ensure that the approaches to teaching a

subject, including in the early years, helps pupils to know more of the subject. Checks on how well the school's curriculum is being taught and learned by pupils, including those with SEND, are in their infancy in most subjects.

Pupils with SEND are identified promptly. Leaders ensure that they have positive links with outside agencies to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs. However, not all pupils with SEND receive effective support because their personal targets are not precise. They do not always reflect the needs of the pupil.

Leaders have started to make improvements in the early years. They have developed the learning environment. It supports child-led play and adult-led activities. However, some tasks that children complete do not help them to develop their understanding of the early years curriculum in a meaningful way. Leaders have not considered how the mixed-age classes will support pupils in Year 1 to learn alongside children in the early years.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' character development. The school's value of 'reach far' has helped to improve aspirations and behaviour for most pupils. However, during social times, some pupils do not always live up to leaders' high expectations of conduct. Adult responses to misbehaviour are inconsistent. Leaders are further developing the curriculum to help pupils understand concepts such as tolerance, respect and diversity.

The governing body is now holding leaders to account for their actions. This is helping to move the school forward in a sustained way. Governors recognise that there is much more work to do. They are ensuring that all their statutory duties are being met. They are currently appointing a qualified special educational needs and disabilities coordinator.

Staff recognise that the school is changing quickly. Most of them feel well supported. Leaders are sensitive to staff well-being and workload. Staff appreciate the various training opportunities that are offered.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff have appropriate safeguarding training. They ensure that all staff understand the local risks that pupils may face. Leaders are refining the school's safeguarding record-keeping systems. They are ensuring the information they hold helps them to make clear links between safeguarding, behaviour and attendance. Leaders have developed an 'early help team' within school. This team supports pupils' needs and signposts families to additional support within the local community. This has impacted positively on parental relationships.

Pupils understand the consequences of online bullying on social platforms. Pupils understand how to report these concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some leaders are new to their roles. They do not yet have the knowledge or expertise to make checks on how well all pupils, including those with SEND and in the early years, are remembering what they have been taught. They do not have the necessary knowledge to support teachers with the delivery of subject curriculums. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders have the appropriate support, knowledge and expertise so that they fulfil their roles effectively.
- Leaders' expectations for what children in the early years can achieve is not ambitious. The curriculum is not planned carefully across the foundation stage to ensure that it builds children's knowledge as they move through the early years into Year 1. Leaders must ensure that staff have high expectations for all children in the early years. They must ensure that the curriculum is well sequenced to develop children's knowledge and prepare them for their next stage in education.
- The targets that are set for pupils with SEND on their personal plans are not precise enough. This means that the curriculum for pupils with SEND is not well matched to their specific needs. Leaders should ensure that improvement targets for pupils with SEND contain precise, well-matched targets to enable them to know more over time.
- Not all staff have high expectations for pupil behaviour during social times. This leads to inconsistencies in how behaviour incidents are managed. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the highest expectations for pupils' behaviour. They must ensure that all adults apply the school's behaviour systems consistently.

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.

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	112686
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10241081
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	135
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lynda Joyce
Headteacher	Darren Hooley
Website	www.ashbournehilltopschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 and 13 December 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of governors. The headteacher took up post in January 2021.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND. This supports pupils with profound and multiple learning needs.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 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 leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held various meetings with the headteacher, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives into early reading, mathematics and religious education. Inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum. They visited lessons, looked at samples of pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils.
- Meetings were held to discuss the school's arrangements for safeguarding. This included looking at documents and the school's safeguarding records.
- A range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans and documentation relating to governance, was examined.
- Inspectors met with several groups of pupils. This included discussions around the school's curriculum, behaviour and personal development. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson times, around school and over lunchtime.
- The views of staff and parents were considered through the Ofsted surveys. Inspectors also spoke to parents while on site during the inspection.

Inspection team

Shaheen Hussain, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Luella Manssen

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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