

Inspection of a good school: Ashdon Primary School

Bartlow Road, Ashdon, Saffron Walden, Essex CB10 2HB

Inspection dates:

14 December 2022

Outcome

Ashdon Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Ashdon Primary School is a place with a distinct family feel. It is a warm and welcoming place for pupils to learn and make friends. Pupils say that people are kind to each other, and that bullying is extremely rare. If pupils have a worry, they know that adults will help to sort things out.

Pupils appreciate the way that the adults want them to work hard and achieve well. They say their teachers help them to improve their writing. Pupils enjoy the range of books that teachers read to them. By the time pupils are ready to start secondary school, they are avid readers. They are eager to talk about the exciting books they choose.

There is plenty for pupils to do and take part in beyond the academic curriculum. Trips include visits to historical sites. The youngest pupils regularly go on 'safari trips' in the local community to appreciate nature and meet the people who work in the local church. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility through working in the school library and becoming house captains, for example. They often take part in charity fundraisers and enjoy being in school productions.

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

Leaders and teachers have designed a curriculum that is interesting, inspiring, broad and ambitious. This curriculum makes links with the school's core concepts and values, such as equality. Leaders have a detailed understanding of how the curriculum is being taught in most subjects. However, in a small number of subjects, subject leaders do not have a firm understanding of how well their subjects are being taught, meaning they are not in a position to make adjustments when they are needed.

Teachers present information clearly and set appropriate tasks. They ask probing questions and give helpful feedback to pupils. This helps pupils to understand and remember what they have studied. Children in Reception Year take part in some of the older pupils' learning experiences. This helps them to learn new vocabulary and

knowledge. They have opportunities to use this during guided play, such as in the role play area. As a result, pupils of all ages can remember a lot of detail about the topics they have learned.

Leaders have recently improved their approaches to teaching early reading. Their chosen programme systematically builds pupils' knowledge of phonics. It makes use of songs and stories to help pupils to learn to read. Books are well matched to the sounds pupils know and need to practise. Leaders have trained all staff in how to teach this new early reading curriculum. Pupils enjoy and look forward to their reading lessons. However, some staff are still learning how to refine their teaching of the new phonics programme. Nonetheless, because the core elements of the programme are used consistently well, pupils are quickly becoming confident readers. Adults use regular assessment to carefully pinpoint pupils' gaps in learning. Pupils who need more support receive apt extra teaching to help them catch up.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) flourish. Leaders are quick to identify pupils' needs and set them ambitious, achievable academic targets. Staff carefully adapt the support they offer each pupil in lessons. They do this with warmth and patience, having taken the time to get to know the pupils and their parents. This helps pupils with SEND get the best out of their learning experiences.

Leaders and teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Teachers help pupils to listen well and take pride in their work. Staff make sure that pupils' effort and achievements are regularly praised and rewarded, including in assemblies. As a result, pupils are eager to learn and the atmosphere around the school is pleasant and orderly.

Leaders have carefully mapped out opportunities for pupils' wider development. This includes finding ways to enrich pupils' curriculum experiences with trips, including residential visits. Visitors share their knowledge and expertise with pupils. This helps pupils to learn about the church and how the law works, for example. Pupils have opportunities to become more musical and develop their sporting ability.

Governors are continuously looking for ways to make the school more 'outward facing'. They support leaders to make connections with the wider education community. This approach is helping staff to develop their curriculum expertise. Governors appreciate that as the school is small, staff have many responsibilities. Workload can sometimes be difficult to manage. However, leaders are finding ways to minimise workload while striving for continuous improvement. Everyone is supportive of one another, and this means the school is well placed to improve further.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained in keeping pupils safe. Their knowledge about safeguarding is continuously refreshed through regular training, conversations and staff meetings. Leaders and staff know the signs of harm regarding pupils' welfare. They are proactive about providing timely support to pupils and their families when concerns arise. Leaders

keep detailed safeguarding records. Their employment checks of staff are suitably thorough.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe in a variety of contexts, including when they are online. They know they can go to an adult if they have a worry.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not have a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects. This means leaders are not in a position to identify what is not working as well as it might, in order to make improvements when necessary. Leaders should provide support and training to improve the knowledge and skills of subject leaders so that they can gain a better understanding of how the curriculum is being implemented.
- Some staff are still learning how to refine their teaching of the new phonics programme. As a result, lessons are sometimes stilted and staff do not make the best use of resources and time. Leaders need to continue their work to support staff to develop their expertise to bring about the best possible early reading experiences for pupils.

Background

When we have judged good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2013.

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	114964
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10255232
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	66
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Maggie Hartley
Headteacher	Simon Rance
Website	www.ashdon.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019.
- Since the previous inspection, classes have been restructured from four to three classes.
- The school hosts a before- and after-school club run by an external provider.

Information about this inspection

- 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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher and governors and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in other subjects.

- To evaluate the school's safeguarding procedures, the lead inspector spoke with the headteacher, governors and the school's additional safeguarding lead. The lead inspector reviewed the school's records of safeguarding concerns and the school's central register of staff employment checks. Inspectors also spoke with teachers and pupils.
- The lead inspector reviewed the responses received to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the results of Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils. The inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Hannah Stoten, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Sutton

Ofsted Inspector

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