

# Inspection of Aspire Academy

South Gypsy Road, Welling, Kent DA16 1JB

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Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	<b>Outstanding</b>

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils enjoy coming to Aspire Academy. They feel safe and they enjoy their lessons. Leaders expect all pupils to behave well and to do their best. Leaders organise enrichment activities and therapies that supplement the curriculum so that pupils gain the social and emotional skills that they will need for their future lives.

Relationships between pupils and the adults that work with them are strong. Adults understand pupils' different needs and adapt lessons and other activities so that these needs are met. Staff are expert at spotting if a pupil needs extra help managing their behaviour or emotions. They step in quickly to support, for example by suggesting going outside to jump on the trampoline or moving to a relaxing space for a short while. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem, but if it did happen that it would be sorted out quickly.

Leaders have put in place lots of different clubs and activities for pupils to get involved in. These extra activities are carefully chosen to match the pupils' particular interests. Football and other physical activities are a popular choice and pupils often experience success and enjoyment in sports for the first time at the school.

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

Leaders have ensured that an ambitious curriculum is in place which is tailored to the needs of pupils who attend the school. It is broad and has interesting topics that pupils enjoy, like Vikings and Anglo Saxons. Teachers choose interesting activities to teach knowledge and skills in a creative way that captures pupils' interests.

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils to achieve well and to prepare for moving on to secondary school. Leaders have designed a creative programme that helps pupils to work on the areas identified in their education, health and care plans. For example, activities to help pupils become emotionally resilient, more able to work alongside others and to develop the skills they need to manage their behaviour independently. Leaders have also ensured that there is a wide range of specialist therapies available at the school to support the pupils' mental health and well-being.

Teachers' subject knowledge is sound. In some subjects, leaders have clearly identified the component bits of knowledge that they want pupils to acquire. In other subjects this is still being implemented. Leaders have provided a wide range of further training and support to develop teachers' skills even more. Adults understand the pupils' additional needs very well and they use this knowledge to make sure that support is carefully designed for each pupil. For example, some pupils improve their fine motor skills by strengthening their hands with flexible putty. Other pupils develop their active listening skills in fun group activities.

Teachers use assessment well. Leaders make sure that all pupils are assessed as soon as they start at the school. This identifies any gaps that they may have in their education. Teachers then check regularly that pupils are moving through the curriculum successfully. Leaders have ensured that there is a well-organised system in place for teaching pupils to read. Pupils have regular times in the day dedicated to building their phonic knowledge and they read frequently. If pupils can read more fluently, they move on to more complex books and tasks.

Leaders have ensured that the approach to improving pupils' behaviour is effective. Pupils at the school need extra help and support to manage their feelings and emotions and this is done in a respectful and consistent way. Leaders have high expectations that pupils will gain the skills needed to regulate their own behaviour. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Leaders have designed a well-thought-out programme to support the personal development of pupils. For example, pupils have been to see the Lion King, visited Colchester Zoo and have been on residential trips. The activities are carefully chosen to build self-esteem, develop confidence and to give pupils the skills that they will need for the future.

Leaders are committed to the well-being of the staff who work at the school. Staff say that leaders consider their workload and that they listen to them if they have any concerns.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, online and in the community. They learn what to do if they are worried about anything and how to ask for help.

Staff are vigilant in looking out for any signs that a pupil may need help. All concerns are recorded, and leaders are rigorous in the way they follow up these concerns. Leaders work closely with external partners and make sure pupils and their families get the support they need if necessary.

Leaders have made sure that all statutory checks on staff employed at the school are in place.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, it is not clear what the key bits of knowledge that pupils should learn and remember are. This means that in these subjects, pupils find complex tasks difficult because they do not have a secure understanding of the underlying knowledge they need in order to succeed. Leaders should ensure that in all subjects, including those aimed at supporting pupils' social and emotional development, the key skills and knowledge are clearly identified so that teachers know what to teach and in which order.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	144406
<b>Local authority</b>	Bexley
<b>Inspection number</b>	10240966
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	45
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Christine Whatford
<b>Headteacher</b>	Heather Hopkins (co-headteacher) Julie Arkwright (co-headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aspire.lseat.org.uk">www.aspire.lseat.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 and 25 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health difficulties as their primary need. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school is part of the London South East Academies Trust.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the deputy chief executive and the co-headteachers. Inspectors also met with other leaders.

- Inspectors met with the chief executive for the trust, trustees and governors. Inspectors also met with senior representatives of the local authority.
- When evaluating the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. Inspectors scrutinised the school policies and record keeping systems. They also spoke with staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art 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.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects including: geography, personal, social and health education and physical education.
- Inspectors considered the views of 16 members of staff who responded to the Ofsted staff survey. They also considered responses to Ofsted's Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Gary Pocock, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ann Pratt

Ofsted Inspector

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