

Inspection of a good school: Airedale Junior School

Fryston Road, Airedale, Castleford, West Yorkshire WF10 3EP

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 April 2023

Outcome

Airedale Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The curriculum at Airedale is based on the multi-academy trust's core values of 'Ambition, Bravery and Respect'. The respectful relationships evident throughout the school community help everyone to feel happy and safe. Bullying happens very rarely. Staff speak to pupils to repair friendships, even if the bullying has happened out of school time at weekends or during the school holidays. Leaders encourage all pupils and parents to report any worries about bullying straight away so that things can be resolved quickly.

Leaders' high expectations of pupils' learning are paying off. Standards are rising at Airedale. Pupils take great pride in their work. They behave well in lessons. Leaders have successfully redesigned an ambitious curriculum. They prioritised certain curriculum subjects to make this task manageable, taking account of teachers' workload.

The curriculum for pupils' wider development is equally ambitious. Leaders make sure that no one is left out of educational visits. Pupils in Year 6 are learning to play squash at the local courts. This is helping them to develop healthy lifestyles.

Pupils have mature debates on morality and ethics. For example, older pupils debated some of the decisions made by politicians during national lockdowns.

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

The new headteacher started reviewing teachers' workload straight away in September. Staff evaluated all paperwork and agreed together to either 'ditch, keep or tweak it'. Staff really appreciate this reduction in paperwork.

In many curriculum subjects, such as history and geography, teachers have very secure subject knowledge. In a few subjects, such as music or languages, some teachers are less confident. This is because teachers' personal experience, knowledge and skills in these

subjects is variable. Building some teachers' confidence and knowledge in these subjects is the next step in the school's improvement journey.

Leaders waste no time each September identifying pupils who enter Year 3 unable to read as well as they should for their age. Phonics lessons begin in the very first week and continue daily. The reduction in the number of pupils needing to attend these lessons shows how well these catch-up lessons are working. Pupils read books that are well matched to their phonic knowledge every day. This is helping to improve pupils' confidence and reading fluency rapidly. Staff are careful to check pupils' understanding of vocabulary in their reading books.

Staff ensure that extending pupils' vocabulary is prioritised in every curriculum subject. Key words linked to each topic are set out right at the start. For example, in a Year 5 geography lesson on rivers, the teacher checked pupils' understanding of words like tributary, meander and confluence. Understanding this vocabulary is also reinforcing pupils' substantive knowledge.

Leaders' expectations are equally high for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All staff use 'communicate and print' resources to provide visual symbols as prompts for pupils with SEND. For example, in a Year 3 science lesson on light, a little picture sat beside each word on the word bank, so that when the teacher was talking, pupils with SEND had visual picture clues to remind them of the differences between natural and artificial light sources. These communication resources help pupils with SEND to work independently and participate fully in the lesson alongside their peers.

Pupils behave well in lessons and work well together. Leaders provide lots of opportunities for pupils to work scientifically. Pupils work well together, sharing equipment and resources sensibly. Staff simplify scales or provide templates for graphs when pupils with SEND are presenting their findings. Leaders use short quizzes to check pupils' understanding. They make sure that all pupils are keeping up. Pupils are thriving and learning well.

Leaders are improving staff subject knowledge in design and technology. As such, staff confidence in 'design and make' lessons matches their confidence in leading science investigations.

Pupils remember what they have learned about different faiths. This is preparing pupils well for life in modern Britain.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make all the necessary safeguarding checks when recruiting staff.

Designated safeguarding leaders have well-established links with colleagues in local authority children's services. Leaders check to make sure that social workers undertake assessments of pupils' needs within statutory timescales.

Pupils understand the risks they may face outside of school, including peer pressure within the community. Leaders work closely with the local police community support officer (PCSO). The PCSO has educated groups of older pupils about the dangers of knife crime.

Pupils speak warmly about learning mentors, saying that they help pupils to feel safe when they are worried.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is inconsistency in teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge in design and technology, music and languages. Some teachers lack confidence teaching the practical aspects of these subjects. Leaders should provide the training required to help some teachers improve their confidence and subject knowledge in these subjects.

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 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in 6 and 7 December 2017.

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

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| Unique reference number | 141409 |
| Local authority | Wakefield |
| Inspection number | 10255846 |
| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 7 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 407 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Rob Hall |
| Headteacher | Kirsten McKechnie |
| Website | www.airedalejuniorschool.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 6 and 7 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This junior school is well above the average size.
- The headteacher has changed since the last inspection. The new headteacher took up post in September 2022. The headteacher also leads the infant school, which shares the same site.
- This school is sponsored by Northern Ambition Academies Trust.
- The school does not use 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 this into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met the headteacher, the deputy and assistant headteachers. The special educational needs coordinator also met the inspector. The reading, science and geography subject leaders met the inspector separately.

- A meeting was held with the chair of trustees and the chair of the academy council. The lead inspector also met the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading and phonics, science and geography. 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 met with senior staff who lead the wider curriculum, including the leader of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety were evaluated at breakfast club, in lessons, in the dining room and on the playground.
- The school business manager and senior safeguarding leaders met the inspector to discuss recruitment and safeguarding records.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View, and survey responses from staff and pupils. The inspector spoke to several parents before the start of the school day.

Inspection team

Tracey Ralph, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
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