

Inspection of Ash Hill Primary School

Herbert Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 7HT

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 May 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

All are welcome at Ash Hill Primary. Pupils say that it is 'ok to have your own beliefs and opinions that are different to others'. They show care and respect for each other, regularly demonstrating their value of 'community mindedness'. Pupils feel safe and know that there is always someone to talk to if they are worried. Playtimes are happy. Pupils enjoy using the equipment and play well together. Bullying is rare and pupils have confidence that, if it does happen, it is quickly sorted out by adults in the school.

Leaders have established high expectations for behaviour, and most pupils meet these expectations well. In some lessons, where activities have not been well thought out, pupils sometimes become distracted, and this can impact briefly on learning. However, staff act quickly and effectively to bring everyone back to focus well on their learning.

Leaders also have high expectations for pupils' achievement, but these are not yet fully realised throughout the school. In some subjects and in the early years, some curriculum activities are not designed carefully enough to help pupils build their knowledge and skills securely over time. As a result, pupils do not always do as well as they should across the whole curriculum.

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

Leaders have prioritised early reading. They ensure that all teachers and teaching assistants are trained well to teach phonics. In early years, children enjoy learning rhymes and songs which help them learn to read. Teachers make sure that pupils read books which match their phonic knowledge. They regularly check that pupils are keeping up and, if pupils fall behind, they are given extra support to catch up quickly. Friday assemblies end with the headteacher encouraging all pupils to read over the weekend, reminding them that all have membership of the local library. As a result of these actions, pupils become confident, enthusiastic readers.

Leaders have set out a broad and ambitious curriculum in terms of what subjects pupils study. In some of these subjects, such as mathematics and physical education (PE), leaders have thought carefully about what the pupils should know and remember. Here, knowledge and skills are sequenced carefully from early years to Year 6, and this helps pupils to gradually build their understanding. In these subjects, teachers check how well pupils understand before moving on, and pupils learn well.

In other subjects, the curriculum thinking is not as well developed. The small steps that pupils need to make in order to fully understand a subject are not well sequenced. Teachers sometimes design activities for pupils which do not allow them to build their knowledge securely over time. As a result, pupils do not always know and retain enough knowledge in these subjects to prepare them for their next stage of learning. Similarly, in the early years, some activities that are planned for children

do not securely build up to what they will be learning in Year 1. Consequently, children are not prepared well enough for what they will learn next.

Leaders work effectively with teachers to identify if a pupil has special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and seek advice from external professionals where needed. Teachers are supported to adapt teaching and resources appropriately. As a result, pupils with SEND make progress through the curriculum in line with their peers.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are motivated to learn. In the early years, children settle quickly into school life. They learn and follow the routines, which they build on well over time. In other year groups, the 'ready to learn' space and the skilled staff quickly help any pupils who need extra support to learn effectively. Staff skilfully reengage pupils if they lose concentration.

Right from the start, pupils are taught how to stay physically and mentally healthy. In early years, staff help children to develop independence and resilience. They learn to share and take turns. Pupils take part in a range of extra-curricular opportunities such as 'bikeability', chess and sports clubs. They learn about diversity in modern Britain and are knowledgeable about a range of different religious traditions. Older pupils know the dangers of substance abuse. Pupils know their six school values well and are tolerant and supportive of one another.

Leaders are aspirational for all at the school, and staff report that leaders care about their well-being and workload. However, challenges within staffing and governance have hindered intended curriculum improvements. Governors have not held leaders to account well enough. As a result, pupils are not achieving as well as they could.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders at Ash Hill ensure that pupils' welfare and safety are their top priority. Safeguarding leads make sure that staff have received the training they need to identify and report any concerns. Staff are knowledgeable and confident about what to be alert to and how to respond.

Leaders act quickly should pupils require extra help, seeking support from external agencies when necessary. They keep detailed records and ensure that any concerns are rapidly followed up. Appropriate checks are made on all adults who work at the school.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There have been many recent changes in staff. This has impacted on how well and how quickly the school has been able to implement its strategic priorities. Leaders should ensure that these key strategic priorities are known, understood and followed by all stakeholders so that necessary school improvements can take place.
- In some subjects, leaders have not made sure that the curriculum is well sequenced or coherent. As a result, pupils, including children in early years, do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff know what essential knowledge pupils should learn across all subjects and how this builds sequentially over time.
- The work set for pupils in some subjects does not successfully allow them to develop the detailed knowledge needed for the next stage of learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers' knowledge and skills in curriculum task design enable them to implement the school's curriculum effectively.
- Governors have lacked rigour in holding leaders to account for providing a good quality of education. Consequently, school improvement has been hampered. Governors should ensure that they have the knowledge to be able to fulfil their roles and lead strategically.

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	110261
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10269110
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Katherine Knight
Headteacher	Vicki Manning
Website	www.ashhill.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a new headteacher since the previous inspection.
- There have been recent changes to the governing body.
- The school currently uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school has nursery provision for two- and three-year-old children.

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 that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector met with two members of the governing body, one joining this meeting remotely via video link. The lead inspector spoke to an adviser from the local authority (LA) by telephone.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, talked with pupils and staff, visited lessons and looked at a sample of pupils' work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other subjects and heard some pupils read.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and school development plan, the pupil premium plan, governor minutes, the LA report and an independent review into safeguarding.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the school's procedures, records and policies, including records of recruitment checks and checks on volunteers working in school. Inspectors spoke with pupils and staff. The lead inspector met with the designated leader for safeguarding. Inspectors spoke with a representative of the alternative provision used by the school.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views through their responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and parents' free-text comments. An inspector spoke with some parents at the beginning of the second day of the inspection.
- Inspectors considered the views of staff through discussions with them. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views through meetings with them and at other times of the day, such as during visits to lessons, at breakfast club and at lunchtimes.

Inspection team

Fiona Henderson, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Alison Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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