

# Inspection of a good school: Aylesham Primary School

Attlee Avenue, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent CT3 3BS

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Inspection dates:

7 and 8 June 2023

## Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Aylesham Primary School say that their school is a good place to be. Staff are caring and nurturing. Leaders ensure that pupils receive a high level of pastoral support and care. Parents, too, appreciate the warm and inclusive atmosphere that leaders and staff have created.

Pupils talk animatedly about the range of clubs and wider opportunities on offer. For example, pupils who met with the inspector were excited about an upcoming tennis tournament. Leaders ensure that pupils have a broad range of trips and visitors, including regular theatre company workshops, over the course of each year. The excitement and buzz around these events have helped to re-engage pupils with school life following the pandemic.

Pupils show consistent respect for staff and want to be successful in their learning. Following the appointment of the new headteacher, aspects of the school's behaviour policy have been further sharpened to ensure, for example, a more consistent staff response to any poor behaviour or incidents of bullying. Pupils, parents and staff comment positively on improvements in behaviour since the new headteacher started.

Pupils enjoy their learning and concentrate well. However, in some subjects, pupils do not achieve well enough. Leaders know this and are in the process of redeveloping the school's curriculum, including in English.

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

Since the last inspection, pupil numbers have continued to rise rapidly, as new housing has been built in the village. In tandem with responding to the pandemic, leaders have

had to recruit and train new staff to accommodate new classes. Alongside this, there have been a number of changes in headteacher. During these changes, the school's wider senior leadership team has maintained a sense of stability and purpose for pupils and staff.

During this time, leaders have continued to develop the overall quality of education that pupils receive. This work has been very successful in mathematics. Leaders introduced a clear mathematics curriculum and have provided all teachers with ongoing training so that they know how to deliver the curriculum well. As a result, all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in mathematics.

Historically, too many pupils have not had the right support to learn to read successfully. There has been recent, and much needed, work to strengthen the school's early reading curriculum. A new phonics curriculum was introduced in September 2021. Teachers have been trained to teach early reading more effectively. Younger children are now getting off to a better start in reading. Older children, who did not get the right support in Reception, or key stage 1, are now getting effective support to catch up.

There is, however, more work to do to ensure that all pupils, including the weakest readers and pupils with SEND, successfully learn to read. For example, at present, leaders do not ensure that all pupils get enough opportunities to apply their phonics to reading. In addition, the phonics curriculum does not support children in the early stages of learning to write effectively enough.

Leaders promote pupils' love of reading in a range of ways. For example, teachers read aloud to pupils regularly. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the books their teacher reads in class. Leaders are in the process of redeveloping the reading curriculum for pupils in key stage 2. They have also identified that other aspects of the English curriculum, such as the spelling programme for older pupils, are underdeveloped. As a result, pupils do not achieve well enough in writing.

Across the foundation subjects, the overall quality of education that pupils receive needs to be further strengthened. As a result of changes of headteacher, work on the curriculum has not been as rapid or sustained as leaders would have liked. In the recent past, leaders have focused too heavily on how they want teachers to teach before they have clearly identified what they want pupils to learn. The appointment of a permanent headteacher, who took up post six weeks prior to this inspection, has enabled a clearer direction to be set.

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is calm. Pupils want to learn, and they occasionally feel frustrated when the behaviour of others disrupts learning. Pupils, staff and parents recognise the positive impact of the new headteacher on behaviour. The behaviour policy has been rewritten, and staff now feel more confident in applying the school's policy consistently and fairly.

Following the pandemic, many pupils and families needed a great deal of support to return to school. Pupils came back with low levels of resilience, and some continue to have gaps in attendance. Leaders continue to ensure that pupils and their families are

well supported. They engage with external agencies when pupils need specialist help to attend school and learn well. Together, leaders and staff have focused on ensuring that pupils enjoy school so that they want to attend. Pupils have been supported to rebuild their resilience and engagement with learning very effectively.

Governors know the school very well. Like leaders and staff, they want the very best for pupils. They have an accurate understanding of how the school is performing. Governors have high levels of confidence in the new headteacher to bring about the needed improvements.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders ensure that staff are trained to identify when a pupil might need help. When a concern is identified, leaders refer appropriately to external safeguarding partners. Safeguarding records are thorough and detailed. Leaders have a clear understanding of the particular risks that their pupils face. They ensure that staff are aware of these contextual risks and know what to look out for. Senior leaders ensure that safer recruitment procedures are consistently followed.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn to stay safe through the planned curriculum. They proactively engage with external organisations that provide additional safeguarding education for pupils. For example, older pupils are taught about the dangers of county lines.

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

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

- Leaders do not ensure that every child learns to read successfully. Aspects of the phonics programme need further work. Leaders do not ensure that children and pupils at an early stage of learning to read get to practise at a sufficient level reading and re-reading decodable books, nor do they keep tight enough oversight of those children who have fallen behind or those who are at risk of falling behind. Leaders need to continue their work to strengthen the reading curriculum.
- The English curriculum lacks overall cohesion. Leaders are aware of this and plan to introduce a new curriculum in September. Currently, pupils do not achieve well enough in English, including in writing. As they introduce the new curriculum, leaders need to ensure that all aspects of the national curriculum have been carefully considered and sequenced and that the curriculum in Reception fully prepares children for Year 1.
- Leaders have not fully identified the important knowledge they want pupils to learn in the foundation subjects. Teachers do not always know what to emphasise and what to assess. Pupils do not build coherent knowledge in these subjects. Leaders need to continue their work to develop the curriculum and build teachers' subject knowledge in the foundation 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	118563
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10256511
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	390
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Michael Ashley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Darran Callaghan
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aylesham.kent.sch.uk">www.aylesham.kent.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 and 6 December 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The new headteacher started in April 2023, six weeks prior to this inspection.
- The chair of governors was appointed in September 2019, having been a member of the board since 2017.
- Pupil numbers have rapidly increased since the last inspection. At the last inspection, there were 230 pupils on roll. There are now 390 pupils on roll.
- During the pandemic, the school offered places to vulnerable pupils from other, smaller schools that did not remain open to vulnerable pupils. Many of these pupils have remained at Aylesham Primary School and have formally moved on to the school's roll.
- The school is not using any alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.

## 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 inspector met with the headteacher and assistant headteachers.
- The inspector met with the chair of governors and additional members of the governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. Within the deep dives, inspectors 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. For the reading deep dive, the inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 to 3 reading.
- The inspectors also spoke to leaders about curriculum development in other subjects, including personal, social and health education and relationships and sex education.
- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector checked the single central record, reviewed safeguarding records and spoke to leaders, staff and pupils. The inspector considered how well leaders manage safer recruitment and how they manage allegations about adults.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, school development plans and recent minutes of the governing board. The inspector reviewed a range of reports on the school from the local authority.
- The inspector talked to pupils about their learning, what behaviour is like at the school and whether they felt safe.
- The inspector reviewed 58 responses to the staff survey, 42 responses to the parent survey, including the free-text comments, and 56 pupil responses. The inspector spoke to parents on the gate on the morning of day two of the inspection.

## **Inspection team**

Alice Roberts, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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