

Inspection of a good school: Ad Astra Infant School

Sherborn Crescent, Canford Heath, Poole, Dorset BH17 8AP

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 December 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 be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Clare Tantrum. This school is part of the TEACH Poole multi-academy trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Kate Carter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Emma Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Ad Astra, pupils flourish, both academically and beyond the classroom. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They thrive in the warm, nurturing ethos of the school. This starts from the moment they start in Reception. Staff get to know the new intake of children quickly. This helps them to settle into their surroundings. The school's relentless focus on pupils' achievement means that by the time pupils leave Ad Astra, they are exceptionally well prepared for key stage 2.

Pupils enjoy school. They feel safe. Pupils have attendance rates higher than their peers nationally. They display highly positive attitudes to school. In lessons, pupils are curious, engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. Bullying is rare. Staff help pupils sort out any disagreements they may have.

The school ensures that pupils' personal development is integral to its work. This goes beyond the school and into the local community. Pupils participate in reading sessions at local care homes. Pupils show compassion and care for other people. Pupils develop their talents and interests through a wide variety of clubs, such as French, Spanish, 'Storybox' and dance. They know about racial equality through studying historical figures, such as Rosa Parks.

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

The school, supported by the trust, has constructed a high-quality, ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum from Reception to Year 2. It has been meticulously designed for the school's context. The school has ensured that it breaks the learning down into small steps. Consequently, teachers know precisely what to teach and when.

The school is unwavering in its pursuit of continual improvement. It regularly checks the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. Teachers value the support and coaching they receive. Leaders make changes to approaches in the curriculum as necessary. For example, in mathematics, they have made changes to ensure that pupils can recall key facts to help them solve larger problems. In addition, through a close partnership with the partner infant school, teachers help each other to share ideas. This also supports their workload.

Teachers regularly revisit key concepts that pupils have learned in the past. These systems are methodical. Nothing is left to chance. Teachers carefully identify and track the most important knowledge pupils need to learn. They plan times for pupils to revisit this learning with great precision. For example, in the early years, they provide children with independent activities that allow them to recap what they have learned in teacher-led sessions. As a result, they embed their knowledge exceptionally well.

The school has identified the important vocabulary it expects pupils to know and use across all subjects and year groups. Teachers ensure that they teach this vocabulary explicitly. Consequently, pupils can use subject-specific terminology with confidence and accuracy. For example, in music, pupils use terms such as unison, dynamics and pitch. In mathematics, pupils can describe properties of 2D and 3D shapes.

Reading underpins the school's curriculum. Pupils' high outcomes for phonics at the end of Year 1 reflect this. The school has created a bespoke approach for teaching the phonics code. Children begin this straightaway in Reception. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which means they teach reading well. They quickly address any misconceptions. Staff swiftly identify any pupils who fall behind. High-quality support means they catch up and keep up.

Pupils have a passion for reading. This is because the school promotes it whenever possible. For example, pupils participate in a reading for pleasure scheme with a local football club. The school puts on workshops for parents and carers so they can help support with reading at home.

Clear systems for early identification mean pupils with SEND receive additional help or adaptations in a timely fashion. This support is closely matched to their needs. This allows pupils to become increasingly independent.

Through carefully planned assemblies, pupils learn about British values. They display great excitement in their participation in the Christmas production. This helps to build their self-esteem and confidence.

The trust keeps a close eye on the school's performance. It carries out checks of its own, as well as using external support. As a result, trustees support and challenge the school in equal measure.

Parents and carers have very positive views about the school. The parent forum ensures that their voice is heard. One comment, typical of many, was: 'The school makes a real effort to inspire the children and give them opportunities to shine.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 January 2018.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141755
Local authority	Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole
Inspection number	10288202
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	255
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Emma Hall
CEO of the trust	Kate Carter
Headteacher	Clare Tantrum
Website	www.adastra.poole.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 January 2018

Information about this school

- The school is part of TEACH Poole multi-academy trust.
- The headteacher took up her post in 2022.
- Since the time of the last inspection, the executive headteacher has taken up post as the chief executive officer (CEO).
- The school is a UNICEF Gold Rights Respecting School.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, groups of pupils, groups of staff, the CEO of the multi-academy trust and two trustees.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to an adult.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and took into consideration responses to the staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Jason Edge, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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