

Inspection of Aldington Primary School

Roman Road, Aldington, Ashford, Kent TN25 7EE

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 February 2024

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to attend this school and talk eagerly about the things that make it special. They learn to love nature and the outdoors, developing character and resilience in the forest school. As one pupil put it: 'The best things about this school are friendships and being surrounded by nature.' They relish being school councillors, house captains and reading buddies. Pupils know there is always someone who will help them sort out any worries. This nurturing ethos protects pupils and makes them feel safe.

Pupils behave consistently well and apply themselves diligently to their learning. They feel valued and included, knowing the staff want everyone to achieve their best. They are well supported to aim for the high academic and personal expectations staff have of them. Right from the Reception Year, pupils develop independence and confidence.

The school provides an extensive range of curriculum visits and extra-curricular opportunities. Pupils frequently learn through trips to the local woodlands and the village. In clubs before and after school, pupils are actively encouraged to try out a new sport, learn how to care for animals and play tabletop battle games together. This helps to build relationships and develop pupils' characters exceptionally well.

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

Leaders have created a happy and successful school where everyone works together. There is a strong, shared vision for excellence in both pupils' care and their academic achievement. The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and targets staff development where it will benefit pupils most. The school's high aspirations are clear to see in all it does.

Pupils achieve well in English and mathematics. The school is ambitious that they will succeed equally well across the whole curriculum. It has recently put measures in place to ensure that all subjects are taught in the order which best helps pupils build up their learning securely. The school is using new curriculums for some subjects and, where this is the case, staff are still getting to know precisely what knowledge and skills pupils must learn. Teachers are working hard to make the necessary improvements in these subjects. They feel well supported by leaders because change has been thoughtfully planned and carried out.

Teachers use their subject knowledge to bring the curriculum to life. For example, in Reception, they inspire children to observe like artists as they look at daffodils in close detail and spot different species of birds outdoors. Teachers show older pupils how to achieve different effects using charcoal, crayons and printing. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. The school quickly spots their needs and staff expertly adapt activities, teaching and resources to help them learn the same challenging curriculum as their peers.

Adults use questioning skilfully to encourage pupils to reflect on their learning and promote discussion about it. As they do this, pupils remember what they learned in the past and this helps them to understand new ideas. These connections are strongest where curriculums, such as for mathematics, are well established. The school is aware there are some gaps in pupils' learning where new curriculums are being used. Teachers use assessment effectively to identify where pupils need help to catch up.

Reading is taught well. Children get an excellent start to learning phonics in the Reception Year. Teachers pick up on any children who risk falling behind and expertly help them with their knowledge of sounds. The books pupils read match the sounds they are learning, which helps their confidence and fluency. Reception children's love of reading is ignited through regular story times. This dedication to reading is continued throughout the school and older pupils develop good reading habits.

Personal development is a strength of the school. Right from Reception, pupils learn that helping others can make everyone feel happy. Staff set a positive example by showing kindness to one another, and pupils follow. This results in extremely positive and respectful relationships throughout the school. Pupils are taught about healthy relationships and the importance of personal boundaries and consent. They learn about equality and how it is never right to be unkind because someone is different. In preparation for life in modern Britain, pupils are taught about different faiths, their festivals and cultures. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and while playing with their friends in the village. School trips enrich pupils' learning and are linked closely with each subject area. Local visitors to the school, such as farmers and firefighters, illustrate links between the curriculum and possible future careers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects where the curriculum is new, teachers are still becoming familiar with the precise knowledge that needs to be taught. In these subjects, pupils have some gaps in their learning, which makes it difficult for them to access future learning successfully. The school should ensure that staff deliver the new curriculum with confidence, identifying and addressing gaps in pupils' prior knowledge.

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	118365
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10296260
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	191
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave McQuillan
Headteacher	Ben Dawson
Website	www.aldington.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been a new headteacher since the last inspection.
- There has been a new chair of governors since the last inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

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 the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- During the inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and deputy headteachers.

- The inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, art and geography. For each deep dive, they 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.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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 inspectors reviewed a range of the school's documents, including self-evaluation reports, minutes of local governing body meetings and behaviour incident logs.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes. They spoke with pupils about bullying, behaviour, and leaders' expectations of pupils' behaviour.

Inspection team

Jo Brinkley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Tash Hurtado

Ofsted Inspector

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