

Inspection of a good school: Appletree Gardens First School

Appletree Gardens, Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear NE25 8XS

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 June 2024

Outcome

Appletree Gardens First School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are extremely proud to attend this happy and welcoming school. The school's overarching aim is to grow learners. This aim is strongly supported by the five values that sit at the heart of all the school's work. These values include having opportunities, reaching your full potential and having a voice.

Pupils are keen to learn. They talk with enthusiasm about their learning. Pupils benefit from a broad and interesting curriculum that opens their eyes to the world around them. The school offers all pupils a range of wider opportunities. These excite and engage pupils while enhancing their learning.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. Pupils behave consistently well both in lessons and during social times. Pupils' positive attitudes reflect the school's code of conduct, the 'Blossom Code'. Pupils understand, for example, the importance of being respectful, safe and organised.

The relationships between staff and pupils are incredibly warm. Pupils are safe and well cared for. They trust staff to look after them. Pupils enjoy coming to school. All pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), flourish here.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They appreciate the staff's understanding of every individual. One parent said, 'My son thrives at the school because of the support he receives.' This is a sentiment echoed by many parents.

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

Ambition for all is central to the school's curriculum. The school has carefully considered the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. Teachers deliver it with confidence. Pupils have many opportunities to revisit and build on their prior learning. Where there are gaps or misconceptions, teachers intervene to address these quickly. Most subjects, such as mathematics and history, are well developed. These subjects have well-

considered teaching approaches. In these more developed subjects, the school reinforces pupils' learning through practical experiences. For example in history, Year 3 pupils learn more about life in the Stone Age through making and using ancient tools. Similarly, Year 2 pupils, when learning about The Great Fire of Newcastle, make models of the buildings that were destroyed by that fire. Pupils can confidently recall what they learned from these hands-on activities. Some foundation subjects need further refinement. In these, less developed subjects, the school does not reinforce key learning as effectively as it could.

Children get off to a flying start in early years. Children display a love for learning. They sustain concentration in their play. Right from the start of school, children benefit from well-planned activities.

Leaders have created a culture where reading is celebrated. Developing a love of reading begins in the early years. Across the school, staff deliver high-quality, fun reading sessions. There is a well-organised, structured approach to the teaching of phonics. Pupils quickly learn about letters and the sounds they represent. Pupils read books that match their reading knowledge. Pupils become confident, fluent readers.

The school has a rigorous approach to identifying any additional needs pupils may have. There are robust systems in place to ensure pupils with SEND get the help they need. The school provides highly effective support for pupils with SEND. They access the full curriculum alongside their peers. Support for pupils with SEND includes the use of personalised resources and additional adults in the classroom. All pupils with SEND achieve well.

Staff implement the school's behaviour management systems consistently and effectively. Pupils attend well. There is no disruption to learning.

Pupils' personal development is at the forefront of the school's curriculum. The school offers pupils a wide range of clubs, including sport, art and music. Pupils also benefit from many school trips and access to forest school provision. These opportunities contribute strongly to the development of pupils' self-confidence. Through assemblies and the school's personal, social and health education curriculum, pupils learn about relationships, tolerance and understanding, inclusion and diversity. They display a secure understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils embrace leadership opportunities with relish. They run a school council. Pupils can work as eco-warriors, sports leaders or learning buddies.

There is a strong team spirit at Appletree Gardens. There is a drive for all pupils to be successful. This determination is shared by all involved with the school. Governors hold leaders to account through strong support and challenge. The school engages well with parents. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Staff appreciate the professional opportunities they receive and leaders' consideration for their workload and well-being. Staff morale is high. They are proud to work at the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, the school is still refining how it can bring learning to life for pupils in order to reinforce key subject knowledge. This means that, in some subjects, pupils are not learning or retaining important content as effectively as they could. The school needs to complete its review and refinement of the curriculum so that pupils learn, remember and recall the important content of all subjects equally well.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

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	108584
Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	10297253
Type of school	First
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Leanne Clay
Headteacher	Helen Bruce
Website	www.appletreegardens.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 December 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school does not use any alternative provider.

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 and spoke to the headteacher, senior leaders, curriculum leaders and other staff from the school. The inspector also met and spoke to governors and the school's improvement partner.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. 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 also looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- 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 considered the views provided by parents and carers via Ofsted Parent View. The inspector gathered the views of pupils and staff through meetings and Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

Lynn Chambers, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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