

Inspection of Whitfield Aspen School

Mayfield Road, Whitfield, Dover, Kent CT16 3LJ

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

All pupils are welcome and cared for at this inclusive school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who attend the specialist resource provision, are very much part of this school community. Pupils feel safe and valued.

The school has high aspirations for its pupils, including those with profound, severe and complex needs. The school makes effective adaptations to resources and routines, which supports pupils to achieve well. Pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. Pupils across the school establish positive relationships, so they can play and work together successfully.

Pupils live up to the school's expectations that everyone should be inclusive and kind. The verbal and non-verbal support provided by the school allows all pupils to feel heard and cared for by peers and adults alike. Pupils focus well on their learning. Behaviour both inside and outside of the classroom is positive.

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

The school's curriculum reflects the complex nature of the school. It is based on the school's vision for inclusivity. From the Reception classes onwards, the school has carefully identified knowledge and skills for pupils to learn. Pupils in mainstream classes, as well as those in the specially resourced provision, are supported with equal aspiration. However, in some subjects, work to develop the curriculum is not yet complete. In these subject areas, the activities chosen for pupils to learn do not consistently reflect the full aspiration of the curriculum. As a result, pupils do not build on their knowledge as effectively as they could in these subjects. Pupils in the mainstream classes achieve in line with age-appropriate expectations. Children in the Reception Year benefit from well-chosen activities. Staff expertly develop children's understanding and use well-designed activities to support their learning. Consequently, children are ready for the next stages of their education. Pupils in the specially resourced provision make progress through the curriculum and achieve their personal milestones.

Reading is a whole-school priority. There is a clear programme for teaching pupils to read. Staff have carefully adapted this to meet the needs of the pupils in school. Pupils' love of reading starts from their first days in the Reception Year. Children are enthusiastic and accurate readers. Adults expertly support their development of language through play and teaching activities. Pupils in mainstream classes and those in the specially resourced provision have a rich offer of stories and books to engage with. The school has rigorous systems for checking what pupils know and remember. Pupils struggling with reading, including those with SEND or who are new to the school, are supported to catch up effectively. Most pupils, particularly those in mainstream classes, become confident, fluent readers.

Pupils treat each other with respect and kindness. There is no disruptive behaviour in lessons. Pupils play together kindly at playtimes. They include their peers from both mainstream classes and the specially resourced provision. The school ensures that

behaviour approaches are inclusive and supportive of pupils' needs. The school has a comprehensive strategy for improving pupils' attendance. However, this has not yet had enough impact. Some groups of pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged, do not attend school regularly enough.

Pupils have the maturity and character to be ready for their next stages of education. The school ensures that pupils are taught the knowledge and skills they need to flourish as citizens in modern Britain. Pupils have a detailed understanding of equity and diversity. Children in the Reception Year are expertly taught how to express their needs and feelings. They use this language when learning to share and when resolving differences. Pupils delight in opportunities that bring them together as a whole school. Pupils were proud working with an external theatre company to perform Hamlet. Pupils valued this because it brought pupils in the mainstream and the specially resourced provision together. Pupils with SEND are equally well supported to develop their personal skills.

Parents and carers value the quality of care and support their children receive. Staff are equally proud of the school. Their welfare and well-being remain school priorities. This includes those who are new to the teaching profession. The school's work to develop staff professionally is appreciated by all. Governors meet their statutory duties and support school improvement effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the curriculum requires further refinement. In some subjects, the activities chosen do not consistently reflect the content or aspiration of the curriculum. In these subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they could. The school must ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to provide learning activities that match the intended content and ambition of the curriculum.
- Persistent absence for some groups of pupils is too high. This means that some pupils are missing important learning. The school must continue to refine its approaches to rapidly reduce persistent absence for pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

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	118459
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10341490
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	610
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Roger Knight
Headteacher	Jason Cook
Website	www.whitfieldaspenschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not currently have any pupils who attend an alternative provision.
- The school has a specially resourced provision. There are 180 pupils in the provision, which specialises in the support of pupils with profound, severe and complex needs.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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.
- The inspection team met with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and pupils. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography, music and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also reviewed pupils' work from a range of other subjects.
- 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 inspection team observed behaviour in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day. They considered the views expressed in Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of staff and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Toby Martlew, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Adnan Ahmet	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Hylands	Ofsted Inspector

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