

Inspection of Crooksbar Primary School

Petrel Crescent, Crooksbar Estate, Stockton-on-tees TS20 1SN

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Chris Twiby. This school is part of Ad Astra 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 (CEO), Andy Brown, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Richenda Broad.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy, safe and valued in the school's warm and caring atmosphere. Pupils are polite and respectful and show kindness to staff and each other. Staff create a nurturing and inclusive environment by supporting pupils' mental health and well-being. Pupils feel welcome and included.

The school is highly ambitious for every pupil to be successful and achieve well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy school and attend regularly. The school prioritises positive mental health by offering high-quality pastoral care and working closely with families. Pupils who need help managing their emotions receive the support that they need. Pupils follow clear behaviour routines based on being ready, respectful and safe. They move calmly through school. Pupils behave sensibly in lessons, following routines and engaging positively in their learning.

Pupils take pride in leadership roles, such as librarians and school councillors. Older pupils look out for younger ones in the playground, making sure no one is left out. 'Foundation friends' support Reception pupils at lunchtime, in the library and during outdoor activities. Pupils are ambitious for their futures and appreciate the many opportunities available to them. Parents and carers value the school's high expectations and the variety of activities provided.

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

The curriculum is carefully designed to build pupils' knowledge over time. Pupils learn and remember the curriculum well. They regularly revisit previous learning and apply this to new tasks. Vocabulary is a key focus in lessons. Teachers present new information clearly. They routinely check how well pupils understand the learning. When pupils have gaps in their understanding, extra support is provided.

Lessons include opportunities for pupils to work together and think independently. Pupils enjoy sharing their knowledge with others. The well-sequenced curriculum supports pupils to learn through a range of carefully chosen activities. However, occasionally some learning tasks are less effective in helping pupils to deepen their knowledge. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

The school, with the support of the trust, has strengthened its provision for pupils with SEND. The school acts quickly to identify pupils with SEND. Staff have received training to ensure they provide appropriately tailored work and carefully chosen resources. These improvements ensure staff have the expertise to provide the right support for pupils with SEND as they progress through the school.

Phonics is taught consistently by well-trained staff. Pupils quickly become fluent, confident readers. Books are carefully matched to pupils' reading ability. Staff provide support by pre-teaching key words and sounds. Regular checks ensure secure progress, with targeted interventions for those who need extra help. Older pupils engage well with texts, sharing ideas and answering questions to show their understanding. Pupils enjoy reading

challenges and rewards, such as reading scrapbooks and the 'star reader' bag. Pupils' written work shows a thorough understanding of the knowledge they are learning. However, there is variability in how the writing curriculum is taught. A small number of pupils do not present their work consistently well or apply their knowledge to write accurately and at length.

The early years curriculum focuses on the development of communication and language. From the start, children enjoy rhymes and songs, as well as learning to love books and stories. Resources are carefully chosen to spark curiosity and problem-solving. Staff skilfully interact with children to extend their understanding. Children manage their learning independently in a calm and purposeful environment. They listen well, enjoy learning and show resilience.

The behaviour policy has been reviewed to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school day. Pupils follow the school's clear rules and expectations. Staff regularly praise expected behaviour. Pupils are proud to receive rewards such as house points, stickers, and the 'Barney' award. Lessons are calm and purposeful. During breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils engage positively with each other. Sports leaders and play buddies encourage purposeful play.

The school's personal development offer develops pupils' confidence, resilience and independence. Assemblies, clubs and educational visits enrich their learning, and they understand how to stay safe online. Pupils show respect for different faiths and beliefs and have a strong understanding of equality and fundamental British values. They take part in debates and discussions, preparing them successfully for life in modern Britain.

The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Support from the trust has helped leaders and staff grow their knowledge and confidence through coaching and mentoring. Managing staff workload and well-being has been a key priority. Staff feel well supported by leaders. Governors check the school's progress and focus on key priorities.

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 subjects, the activities chosen do not consistently deepen pupils' knowledge effectively. This means that once pupils have learned the key knowledge, they sometimes do not have the opportunity to develop their understanding further. The school should ensure that learning activities provided in all subjects develop and deepen what pupils already know and can do.
- The school's writing curriculum is not implemented consistently across year groups. This means, in some cases, pupils' written work lacks pride and some pupils do not

build their knowledge and skills progressively over time as well as they could. The school should continue to refine its writing curriculum to deliberately incorporate opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills and make sustained progress.

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).

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors met with leaders from the trust including the CEO. They met with a trustee and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around the school, at playtime and at lunchtime. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their views of the school, their learning, behaviour and safety.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free text comments. Inspectors also talked to parents in the school playground.
- Inspectors met with staff to gather their views of the school. They also considered the responses to the Ofsted survey for staff.

Inspection team

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