

Aylesham Primary School

Attlee Avenue, Aylesham, Canterbury, Kent CT3 3BS

Inspection dates

5–6 December 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher provides very effective and inspiring leadership for the school. He is very well supported by the deputy headteacher.
- Leaders, staff and governors share the vision, ambition and determination to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils.
- Leaders and governors have successfully improved the school, which, due to instability in staffing and leadership in the period after the last inspection, was declining. Teaching, the curriculum and pupils' outcomes are better as a result.
- Teaching and learning have improved and are typically good across the school. As a result, pupils are making good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2017, attainment and progress in writing were stronger than they were in reading or mathematics. More pupils are currently working at the expectations for their age in reading and mathematics.
- Too few pupils in key stages 1 and 2 are achieving greater depth in their knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' expectations are not always high enough to challenge pupils' learning consistently.
- Children get a good start to school in the early years. The provision is well planned. Children are nurtured and thrive. They make good progress. They are well prepared to continue learning in Year 1.
- Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful of adults and each other. They are caring and kind. They feel safe in school and said that they are confident to turn to adults should any problems arise.
- Pupils behave well. They enjoy school and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils and staff embrace and promote the school values of resilience, teamwork, creativity and flying high, which are threaded through every aspect of the school's work.
- The curriculum motivates and inspires pupils and provides them with memorable learning experiences.
- Governors know the school well and hold leaders to account effectively for the school's performance.
- The work of some subject leaders has yet to have a full impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and so on pupils' outcomes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are consistently high and pupils are challenged more to achieve greater depth in their skills, knowledge and understanding, and so reach higher standards.
- Develop the role of subject leaders to ensure that their work has a greater impact on the quality of teaching and learning, and on pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- After the previous inspection, considerable instability in staffing, including leadership, had a negative impact on the school's performance. The quality of teaching and learning and outcomes for pupils declined.
- Since his appointment, the headteacher has brought about significant changes through his inspirational and highly effective leadership. He has reversed the decline in pupils' achievement and, most importantly, transformed the culture and the ethos within the school. He quickly identified the priorities to improve and took determined and successful action. As a consequence, the school rapidly improved and is now good.
- Parents are pleased with the education their children receive and express their confidence in the leadership. They appreciate the visibility of the headteacher and other leaders. One parent echoed the views of many with the comment: 'The headteacher and deputy headteacher are so approachable, always greeting us in the morning on the school run.'
- The headteacher's vision and unwavering ambition and aspiration to provide the best possible learning experiences for all pupils are shared by senior leaders, staff and governors. He is supported very effectively by the deputy headteacher who, as one parent wrote: '...is highly respected by children and parents.'
- The headteacher has a strong commitment to innovation and improvement through research and support from external consultants, which are actively sought. He has welcomed the effective support from the local authority. This support has now been considerably reduced, because the school has improved as a result of the strengths and capacity in leadership.
- The senior leadership sets great store in getting the best from staff and developing leadership skills. New leaders have been appointed to increase leadership capacity and make further improvements. The impact of the work of English and mathematics leaders is evident in pupils' improved achievement. Middle leaders of other subjects are skilled in their areas. They know the subjects' strengths and weaknesses, and have clear action plans for improvement. The full impact of their work has yet to be realised, including assessment of pupils' achievement, so that they have an even greater impact on the quality of teaching, learning and outcomes in their subjects.
- Leaders' effective monitoring and current evaluations of the school's strengths and weaknesses are accurate. Information from a range of monitoring activities informs the plans for improvement. There are clear milestones for when things will be achieved, which helps leaders and governors to assess the impact and success of their actions.
- The quality of teaching and learning has improved and, as a result, there has been a marked impact on pupils' progress. Senior leaders have high expectations. Where any weaknesses are identified, effective support is provided and improvement is expected. Teachers know they are accountable for pupils' outcomes in their classes, and performance management is used effectively to check on this. Staff value the training they receive to enhance their teaching and leadership skills.
- The school values that the headteacher has introduced resilience, teamwork, creativity

and flying high, which are part of the very fabric of school life and learning. These values have had a demonstrable impact on the culture and ethos in the school. Pupils and staff promote these values exceptionally well in their teaching and learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, including the promotion of fundamental British values, permeates every aspect of the curriculum and the school's work. Pupils learn about and celebrate different faiths and cultures. A group of pupils agreed that the school encourages them to 'Treat other people like you want to be treated.'

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. There is an appropriate focus on reading, writing and mathematics, but not to the detriment of the wider curriculum. Leaders have created a curriculum that provides pupils with memorable learning experiences, which provide a focus for the term's learning and purposeful, authentic outcomes. Pupils have opportunities to apply the skills they learn in creative ways, and reflect and share their learning with others in the school and wider community.
- The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits, visitors to school, special events and clubs. These activities inspire and motivate pupils and make a significant contribution to their personal as well as their academic achievements. One parent wrote that her child has '...become such a confident little girl. There is so much for the children to do and they have a great range of activities during school and also after school.'
- The very effective use of pupil premium funding is helping disadvantaged pupils to catch up quickly with others nationally. Disadvantaged pupils are fully included in all aspects of school life and, as for other pupils, progress is improving.
- The primary sport premium is used very effectively. A specialist sports coach works with pupils and teachers to enhance skills and improve outcomes. There is an extensive range of sports clubs and competitive sports, and an increasing number of pupils are participating.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is good. Any additional funding for these pupils is used effectively. Pupils' needs are identified at an early stage. There are strong links with other agencies, as well as effective in-school support, so that these pupils make good gains in their learning from their starting points.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors know the school well and have an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- They have every confidence in the headteacher's leadership and are very positive about the impact of this on school improvement.
- They share senior leaders' vision and ambition for the future of the school and the outcomes for pupils. They support the headteacher in his high expectations for the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are well informed by leaders and by their own monitoring activities. This enables them to provide an appropriate balance of challenge and support to leaders

and hold them to account effectively for the school's performance.

- Governors ask appropriate questions about the spending of additional funding, such as the pupil premium grant, sport funding and funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. They ensure that funds are spent wisely and make a difference for pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of care at the school, and safeguarding is given the highest priority. This is particularly evident in the vigilance taken to keep pupils safe on the school site while work continues to demolish the original school buildings.
- The school's ethos promotes all aspects of safeguarding very well. All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and know the procedures to follow should they have any concerns. There are three trained designated safeguarding leads, the deputy headteacher, headteacher and family liaison officer, so there is always someone for staff to go to.
- All staff take part in regular training so that they are kept up to date with any new child protection requirements.
- Adults record in detail any concerns they have about pupils' well-being. Leaders work very closely with other agencies to ensure that, where appropriate, pupils receive timely and effective help and support.
- Record-keeping is of the highest quality, documenting all decisions and actions. Communications with parents and other professionals are clearly recorded.
- Pupils said that they feel safe at school and most parents are confident that this is the case.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching has improved as a result of high expectations from senior leaders. It is good overall and, consequently, pupils are making good progress.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. Many agreed with one pupil who said that the school '...is a fun place to learn. Teachers make learning exciting and we learn new things.' Parents agree with this. One wrote: 'My son has just thrived at the school. He is happy going every day and enjoys all aspects. The school has really made learning enjoyable and fun.'
- Very positive relationships between pupils and teachers mean that pupils want to do well and work hard. They develop confidence and resilience. A group agreed with one boy who said: 'You just keep trying and sometimes you can do things you never thought you'd be able to do.'
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to ask pupils questions to challenge their thinking and check their understanding. Pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve because of constructive feedback they receive from teachers. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning. Teachers and pupils link success in learning to the school's values.

- Tasks are usually well matched to the different needs of pupils. In some cases, pupils select work with different levels of difficulty for themselves. Most enjoy challenging themselves, as they are confident to take risks in their learning. Some of the most able pupils told inspectors that even the most challenging work is sometimes too easy for them, and so they do not always make the progress they could.
- Teaching assistants generally make a good contribution to learning by providing additional support and challenge when pupils are working individually or in small groups. In some classes, there is strong teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistant, which supports the learning of all the pupils.
- Phonics skills are taught well and used effectively by most pupils to help them read unfamiliar words. These skills get them off to a good start in the early years and key stage 1.
- The teaching of reading continues as a focus for the school and has high priority. Additional support is provided for individuals and groups who may be falling behind, often from well-trained and skilled teaching assistants. Reading for enjoyment is promoted well. Teachers include motivating and inspiring texts in their planning across the curriculum, which spark pupils' interest and often encourage them to seek out other books by the same authors. Pupils are encouraged to read at home, and older pupils enjoy challenging themselves and developing comprehension skills through an online reading programme.
- Opportunities for pupils to share their thoughts and ideas, before putting pen to paper, have had a marked impact on the quality of pupils' writing, which has improved substantially. Pupils enjoy writing. A pupil in a class that had been planning the next stage of their story said: 'It helps to talk about your ideas and plan because then everything gets sorted in your head.' Teachers provide many opportunities for pupils to write for clear and different purposes and use their writing skills in different subjects.
- In mathematics, teachers have focused on developing pupils' mathematical reasoning skills. Pupils are becoming increasingly adept at explaining their thinking and 'proving' their findings using correct mathematical vocabulary. Groups of pupils in Year 6 were excited and engrossed in their problem-solving challenge to find fractions of amounts. They responded well to the teacher's questions: 'How did you do it?' and 'Can you explain it?'
- Teachers plan interesting and absorbing activities to stimulate pupils' learning. Pupils in Year 3, for example, thoroughly enjoyed a practical science activity, using slices of bread and jelly babies, to help them understand how fossils are formed.
- Within the overall picture of good teaching, senior leaders have correctly identified that expectations are sometimes too low. Not enough demanding work and challenge are provided, to ensure that more pupils achieve greater depth in their skills, knowledge and understanding and reach higher standards.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and respectful of each other, staff and visitors. Older pupils enjoy their responsibilities and take them seriously. They particularly enjoy working with and supporting younger pupils, which they do in a responsible and mature way.
- Pupils enjoy school and they appreciate the facilities in the new school building. Several expressed the view that 'We're very lucky to have such a lovely new school with lots of space.'
- Pupils have positive attitudes to school and are proud to be part of the school community. A group of pupils agreed with one, who said: 'It is a place where you feel safe and make friends.' Another simply said: 'There is no other place I would rather be.'
- There are very trusting relationships between teachers and pupils. As a consequence, pupils work hard and want to do their best. Pupils feel that they are well looked after.
- The school is committed to including and supporting all pupils, whatever their social, emotional or academic needs, to help reduce any barriers to learning. Pupils who may be vulnerable, together with their families, are identified and supported sensitively and effectively.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations in and out of school, including when using the internet.
- In discussions, pupils said, 'We don't tolerate bullying.' They have a good awareness that bullying can take different forms, and of the difference between bullying and friends falling out. They are very confident that, if any incidents should occur, teachers and other adults in school would listen to them and sort it out. The school council takes an active role, along with others, in promoting anti-bullying in school.
- Almost all parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that their children are happy in school. Most parents and staff agreed that children are safe and well looked after. One parent wrote: 'All teachers at the school are kind and caring and have so much time for the children. The children feel safe and have brilliant support from the likes of the family liaison officer and the SEN leader.'
- A very small minority of parents who responded to Parent View indicated some concerns with how effectively the school deals with bullying. Inspectors found that the school has clear procedures for dealing with any bullying, should it occur. Staff manage problems effectively.
- Pupils who attend the breakfast club receive a safe, healthy and happy start to the school day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and to visitors.
- Pupils are respectful of their new school and conduct themselves well as they move around the building and during assembly times.
- Pupils behave well at lunch and breaktimes. They are well supervised and encouraged to take responsibility for their own conduct.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They understand the expectations for their behaviour, are usually attentive and concentrate well. Occasionally, if time is not used well or insufficient demands are made to challenge pupils' learning, they can become distracted and lose their focus.
- Pupils demonstrate tolerance and understanding of others who find it more difficult to manage their own behaviour. Pupils who have specific behaviour needs are supported effectively so that the learning of others is not disrupted.
- Most pupils attend school regularly. Attendance has improved but remains a little below average. Staff monitor the attendance of individuals and groups carefully. Leaders and the family liaison officer work hard with families and external agencies where attendance issues persist.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- After the previous inspection, standards dipped. The headteacher has worked successfully to raise achievement and the impact was seen in 2017, as standards improved considerably from the previous year. By the end of Year 2 in 2017, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standards was above that found nationally in reading and writing. It was just below the national average in mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6 in 2017, the proportion of pupils that reached the expected attainment increased considerably from 2016. The proportion was above that found nationally in writing but, despite the improvement, remained below that found nationally in reading and mathematics.
- In 2017, progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 was not significantly different from that found nationally in reading and mathematics. In writing, however, it was stronger and significantly above that found nationally. This was a result of the school's focus on raising standards in writing. Assessments of pupils' writing are robust and secure.
- The school's assessment information and work seen in books indicate that pupils currently in the school are making good overall progress across a range of subjects, including English and mathematics. Progress is a little uneven across the classes. Leaders have correctly identified that pupils' spelling is weaker and appropriate action is being taken to improve their skills.
- The progress of disadvantaged pupils improved in 2017, and this group made even more rapid progress in writing than other pupils. The progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school is generally in line with the school's expectations but, as with other pupils, there is a little variation across the classes. There are differences between

the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of others. These differences are diminishing compared with previous years. In some cases, compared to others, a greater proportion of disadvantaged pupils are achieving the expectations for their ages.

- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points in a range of subjects, and in their social and emotional well-being. Leadership is good and resources, including additional support, are used well to effectively meet the needs of this group.
- The proportion of pupils that reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been on an upward trend over the past three years and, in 2017, was just below that found nationally. The few pupils who did not reach the expected standard are given effective support so that they quickly catch up in Year 2.
- Although improved in 2017 from the previous year, too few pupils achieved greater depth in their learning or higher standards by the end of Year 6. Current pupils, including the most able, are not always challenged sufficiently to achieve as well as they could.

Early years provision

Good

- Children make good and sometimes very rapid progress from starting points that are often well below those typical for their age when they start in the early years. They catch up quickly. The proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the early years is at least in line with that found nationally, and children are well prepared to continue learning in Year 1.
- The headteacher currently provides good leadership for the early years while a new teacher is supported in developing this role. He has ensured that assessments of children's achievement are robust. Progress is accurately tracked and informs the next steps for development. Strengths in the provision and areas needing further development are clearly identified.
- There are good systems for getting to know the children and their families before they start, so there is a smooth transition into school for children and parents. There are continuing links with parents so that home and school can work together to support children's learning. One parent wrote: 'My son has had homework set that helps with additional learning that gets all the family involved. I'm very pleased I picked this school for my son to attend.'
- Staff provide a happy, safe and nurturing atmosphere. Children's well-being is paramount. All the necessary actions are taken to support children whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Children settle well into the routines of the day and develop confidence and independence. Children listen to adults and behave well. They share, play and learn well together.
- Children are kind and help each other. A group enjoyed their Christmas activities, making crowns for the Kings, and could describe what they were doing and why. One girl, without any adult prompting, said to her friend, 'I'll hold it here for you then you can stick it.'
- Teaching and learning are good. Staff create a calm, busy and purposeful atmosphere.

Adults engage children well in learning activities, which are well planned to meet the needs and interests of the children. Children are encouraged to make their own choices and challenge themselves.

- Staff make the most of the current restrictions to the outdoor learning space because of the ongoing work on the site. Children enjoy the practical activities that help to fire their imaginations, encourage them to be creative and develop their enquiring minds.

School details

Unique reference number	118563
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10039657

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Webster
Headteacher	Ian Rowden
Telephone number	01304 840392
Website	www.aylesham.kent.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@aylesham.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 September 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Aylesham is a little smaller than the average-sized primary school, with a rising roll as it moves to become a two-form entry school. The school is rapidly expanding as a new housing development is completed.
- Currently there are nine classes. Three of these are mixed-aged classes.
- The school de-federated from Vale View Primary school in April 2017.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium funding is above average.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- In September 2017, the school moved into its brand-new building on the school site. The original school buildings are waiting to be demolished.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in all classes and examined work in pupils' books. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils, talked to pupils about their learning and listened to some pupils read. They observed pupils in the playground, at lunchtimes and during assemblies.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other staff with key leadership responsibilities. Meetings were held with governors and the local authority improvement adviser.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documents including: leaders' checks on the school's performance and the quality of teaching; the school improvement plan; information on pupils' progress; and records relating to attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors considered the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, which included 10 written comments. An inspector also spoke to some parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sean McKeown	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
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Manchester
M1 2WD

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