

Inspection of a good school: Aston by Sutton Primary School

Aston Lane, Aston, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 3DB

Inspection date:

28 June 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is a happy place to be. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enjoy being a part of this encouraging community. Everyone knows each other so well. Staff forge strong relationships with the pupils. Pupils and children form trusting friendships with each other. This helps pupils to feel safe and to develop confidence.

Pupils are respectful and articulate. They play happily outside with their friends and work hard in their lessons. Pupils said that staff are kind and supportive. Pupils do not worry about bullying. They know that if it happened, it would be dealt with quickly by staff.

Pupils trust that staff will do their best to help them. That said, some pupils lack the support that they need to read confidently. Added to this, some teachers do not receive the guidance that they need to deliver some curriculums consistently well. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects, including in reading.

Pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy a range of exciting activities to enrich their learning. These include residential trips and visits to museums. Pupils also appreciate the clubs that they can attend to pursue their interests. Pupils pride themselves on caring for each other. They said that everyone is welcome in their school because everyone is different but everyone is equal.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. In most subjects, leaders have decided on the important content that they want pupils to learn and have ordered it logically.

In subjects such as mathematics and geography, leaders are clear about what they want pupils to know and remember. Teachers present content clearly and check pupils' understanding before moving on to new ideas. Consequently, pupils build well on their previous learning and achieve well.

That said, in several other subjects, leaders' revised curriculums have only recently been introduced. Subject leaders have not checked whether these curriculums are being delivered as intended. This means they are unable to offer effective support to help teachers to deliver certain aspects of these curriculums well. Furthermore, subject leaders have not supported teachers to check that pupils know and remember curriculum content. As a consequence, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have recently reviewed their approaches to teaching phonics. Children start to learn about sounds and letters in daily lessons as soon as they begin in Reception class. Those staff who lead phonics lessons have had training to deliver the programme effectively. As a result, most pupils learn to read fluently by the end of Year 2.

However, some staff have not been trained to deliver the phonics programme or to support pupils in the early stages of reading. This affects those pupils who struggle the most as they do not benefit from the high quality support that they need to catch up in reading. In addition, some of the books that pupils are given to practise their reading are too difficult. This can make reading laborious for pupils, affecting their enjoyment of reading as well as their confidence.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified early. Teachers receive helpful guidance and training in how to adapt their approaches so that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. However, leaders have not checked how well this is working. This means they are unable to provide specific further guidance to teachers when required.

Children in the early years get off to a positive start. They learn to listen attentively and are encouraged to express their ideas. Children benefit from a nurturing environment and they enjoy playing and interacting with their friends. In other year groups, pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are positive. They know that they have a voice and that their ideas are valued. The atmosphere in the school is calm and productive, where pupils can learn without distraction.

Leaders provide a rich menu of opportunities to help pupils gain respect for differences in backgrounds, families and beliefs. The school culture is welcoming and pupils learn about the importance of recognising and celebrating people's differences. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard.

Governors are committed to the school. They have provided support to school leaders throughout the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have recently started to renew their focus on school improvement. However, governors have not ensured that they are informed well enough about the curriculum.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate that their workload is considered by leaders.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspectors agreed that some foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection. The subjects for focus will be art and design, design and technology, computing and music.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular safeguarding training so that they remain alert to the signs that could indicate that a pupil may be suffering or at risk from harm. Staff understand the clear procedures that leaders have put in place to report any concerns that they may have about a pupil.

Leaders communicate well with parents. Leaders work in partnership with a number of agencies to access help for vulnerable children and their families. Leaders are not afraid to escalate their concerns when required.

Leaders ensure that pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes road safety and how to avoid the risks associated with the use of social media.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff have had training in the phonics programme. This means that some pupils who struggle with reading do not get the focused and additional support they need to help them to catch up quickly. Furthermore, the books that some pupils are given to practise their reading are too difficult, which affects their developing confidence and fluency. Leaders must ensure that all staff are trained to select books that pupils can decode confidently and give them the effective support they need to catch up quickly.
- The curriculums for many subjects are in the early stages of development. Leaders and subject leaders have not checked whether teachers are delivering the curriculums as intended. Leaders should check that the curriculums in all subjects from the early years to Year 6 are being delivered as intended. This will enable leaders to provide more guidance to teachers as required. Subject leaders should also support teachers to check that pupils know and remember important curriculum content so that pupils can deepen their understanding of these subjects over time.
- Governors are not informed well about the quality of the curriculum. As a result, they are not able to provide an appropriate level of challenge to leaders. Governors should ensure that they have the information they need to hold leaders to account effectively for the quality of education for pupils across the curriculum.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2014.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	110993
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10240742
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	105
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Claire Cavanagh
Headteacher	Anna Plant
Website	www.aston.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to the membership of the governing body. There are currently some vacancies.
- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders. They also spoke with subject leaders and members of staff.
- The lead inspector attended a virtual meeting with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes and around the school. They spoke with different groups of pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.

- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation, checked attendance information and spoke to leaders, governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered aspects of a number of other subjects on the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey. This included the comments received via the free-text facility. They also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's survey for pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation shared by school leaders, including the school development plan and the minutes taken at governors' meetings. Inspectors also reviewed a range of documentation available on the school website.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Schelene Ferris

Ofsted Inspector

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