

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Aycliffe Drive Primary School

Aycliffe Drive, Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire HP2 6LJ

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Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

## Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel welcome and respected at Aycliffe Drive Primary School. From the moment children join the school in Nursery or Reception, routines are in place to help children quickly settle and feel comfortable and safe. Pupils respond maturely to adults' high expectations for conduct. This results in pupils becoming valued and active members of the wider school family.

Pupils are recognised for showing important qualities such as kindness and helping others. They are proud of the leadership roles they take on that make a difference to their school community. However, the quality of lessons pupils receive does vary, and this limits their achievement in some areas of the curriculum. This can disproportionately impact learners who have gaps in their prior knowledge, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

A wide range of opportunities help pupils get ready for the challenges of learning. Pupils know that adults care about them. They say that adults go above and beyond to help them belong and be happy. This includes the opportunity for pupils to attend a morning club to encourage them to be in school every day. Too many pupils are still regularly absent from school, and this is a barrier to their achievement.

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

The school has started work to improve the ambition and clarity of its curriculum. However, this work is not finished, and the curriculums in some subjects are not consistent in quality. Where subjects are more developed, the school has thought carefully about the specific order in which knowledge and skills should be taught. In these

subjects, teachers select helpful tasks and use resources to help pupils remember more. Where this is less consistent, lesson activities are not always purposeful and teachers' expectations of what pupils will achieve are less clear. As a result, pupils' knowledge in some subjects is less secure.

The school prioritises the effective teaching of early reading. Recent changes to the phonics curriculum are already supporting a higher number of pupils to progress well. There is rapid support for pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Pupils access a range of quality books to help them read fluently. These are accurately matched to the sounds pupils know to maximise practice at the right level. The coherent curriculum in the early years is leading to effective learning. Children receive the support they need according to their stage of development. This helps them to build independence quickly as they choose and engage with meaningful tasks.

Throughout the school, pupils show high levels of respect for others as they play and learn together. This is also seen in their strong relationships with adults. Pupils appreciate the wide range of rewards that recognise their good behaviour and achievements. They are supported to be the best version of themselves.

The absence rate of pupils has been stubbornly high, and improvements, until recently, have not tackled this effectively. The school has a refreshed commitment to tackle low attendance. The school's actions are drawing on the most up-to-date guidance. Improvements are starting to be seen, but it is early days and there is still more to do.

Staff are united in a strong commitment to help pupils become responsible and resilient. The school identifies barriers to pupils' learning early and accurately. It puts in place well-designed support to address the needs identified. This applies to pupils with SEND. Despite the effective whole-school provision for pupils with SEND, variability in the approach taken in different subjects poses a particular challenge for the most vulnerable pupils, who need the greatest support.

All pupils take on leadership roles during their time in school, and this helps them to become mature, show responsibility and care for others. A well-designed curriculum in personal, social, health and economic education helps pupils develop strong identities. It ensures pupils gain the knowledge they need to keep their growing bodies and minds healthy. Pupils benefit from opportunities to learn about risks to their well-being, including when online. Pupils also learn to manage physical risks as they explore and learn skills in the school's woodland.

Since the previous inspection, priorities in the school have been identified well, but action has not been swift enough in all areas. Governors have not held leaders to account sufficiently for improving the quality of education and pupils' attendance. Leaders at all levels in the school are working with a renewed focus under the direction of the new headteacher. The governing body members are already sharpening their knowledge to hold leaders to account more effectively.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### What does the school need to do to improve?

#### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variability in the planning and delivery of the school's curriculum. This means that, sometimes, the education pupils receive is not focused enough on the important knowledge and skills they need for future learning. The school should continue with its work to ensure that it is clear what pupils need to know and remember in each subject.
- The choices teachers make for activities and resources are not consistently effective. This means that, sometimes, pupils do not get opportunities to practise the most important curriculum content. The school should ensure that teachers have strong, shared knowledge about how to deliver the curriculum well across all subjects. This will help to improve how teachers select tasks and resources to maximise pupils' learning.
- Until recently, the actions governors have taken to hold leaders to account have not been sufficiently robust. Their knowledge about some aspects of the school, including pupils' attendance and the quality of education, has not been secure. This means the required improvements in these areas have not been rapid enough. The school should continue with plans already set out to build the expertise and confidence of governors. This will help them fulfil their roles, with a sharp focus on monitoring pupils' attendance and the curriculum.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in July 2019.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

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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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117335
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345196
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	332
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Rosamund Russell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Katie Atkinson
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aycliffedrive.herts.sch.uk">www.aycliffedrive.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	9 and 10 July 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in headteacher. The new headteacher started in September 2024.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- The school provides a breakfast club childcare provision, managed by the governing body.

## Information about this inspection

- 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. 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 held meetings with the headteacher, three assistant headteachers including the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, the early years leader, a key stage leader and a selection of subject leaders.

- The inspector met with three representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. A separate meeting was held with an improvement partner from the local authority.
- The inspector visited a broad sample of lessons, spoke to a range of pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.

### **Inspection team**

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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