

Inspection of a good school: Aston Rowant Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Aston Rowant, Watlington, Oxfordshire OX49 5SU

Inspection dates:

24 May 2022

Outcome

Aston Rowant Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Every child is known and believed in at Aston Rowant. It may be a small school, but everyone here has big ideas. The school's strapline of 'growing together' encourages pupils to do this. The headteacher cultivates an ambition for every child to achieve well with no limits placed. Staff are now stepping up to make this more of a reality.

Pupils happily look out for each other. They affirm that bullying has no place here, and know that adults would sort out any issues right away. In lessons, most pupils work hard. Around school, they do the right thing. Pupils speak eloquently to visitors.

'Forest Fridays' are universally popular. Pupils embrace learning outdoors, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. They oversee the school's allotment, cook on a campfire and explore mini-beasts. Adults ensure that pupils know how to keep safe when exploring the school's natural wilderness.

Pupils fight for climate change as 'eco-warriors'. Their work even featured at the United Nation's COP26 summit. Pupils are immersed in opera, chess and charity work. Furthermore, they love completing the morning daily mile. All in all, many pupils would not change a thing about their 'not overly crowded, nice village school'.

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

On her arrival, the headteacher identified that the school's performance had dipped significantly. She set about putting plans in motion to reverse what had happened. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, she courageously pressed on. Leaders have utilised well the help of the local authority and diocese. The hard work of the staff team has paid off. The school is moving from strength to strength. Leaders know there is work to do, but the team spirit is buoyant. Parents praise these necessary changes for the better.

Governors had been seeing the school through rose-coloured glasses. Since bringing in new blood, governors are clearer about what to do. They have streamlined the focus of each committee. This has enabled governors to offer greater challenge and ask the right questions. They know productive ways to seek assurances about what leaders tell them.

The newly introduced phonics programme is bringing about greater consistency in how pupils are taught to read. Informed by their training, staff know to follow the plans as laid out. Leaders used the programme's assessments to ensure that pupils started at the right point. For pupils who need extra practice, one-to-one sessions are working well. They include rereading the matched books from the programme. Teachers devote daily time for pupils to read independently. Pupils love recommending books to each other.

The school's curriculum is well thought out and aspirational. Leaders identified precisely the knowledge that pupils must learn in each subject. Within subjects, knowledge develops logically so that pupils build on what they remember. Even so, the connection between early years content and what is then taught in key stage 1 needs sharpening.

Teachers' own subject knowledge is generally strong. Where they use questioning effectively, teachers pick up pupils' misconceptions quickly. They then reteach a concept to secure pupils' understanding. However, teachers sometimes set lesson activities that do not secure pupils' knowledge well enough. This is because teachers are not always clear about the best ways to implement subject content successfully.

The school's current approach to assessment is not precise enough. Leaders and governors are in the habit of wanting teachers to provide assessment data. Often it is in the form of generic judgements which are too broad. These do not help leaders or teachers to know precisely what pupils have remembered. Furthermore, it adds to everybody's workload.

The pandemic has impacted on some pupils' behaviour, particularly in early years and key stage 1. Leaders are checking that all staff have the highest of expectations for all pupils in lessons. Most staff continually reinforce rules and routines. Sometimes, though, adults do not refocus quickly enough a child who might be distracted.

Communication between the school and families to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is excellent. Efficient systems are in place to quickly pick up a child's learning needs. Leaders involve parents from the start. It is a partnership. The child's views are well considered. In lessons, teachers ensure that pupils with SEND learn the same content as other pupils. Where needed, teachers adapt work successfully.

It is easy to spot an Aston Rowant pupil. The way they convey themselves to others is impressive. Pupils say it does not matter if a person looks different to another. They go out of their way to make everyone feel welcome.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

An exceptional culture exists where adults care and look out for every child. Leaders ensure safeguarding is threaded through every aspect of school life. All staff know about the safeguarding 'go to' board. Here, they can find all the answers they need. Training updates are regular and pertinent. Adults communicate any concern straight away. Leaders record everything diligently and act fast. Leaders work very well with other agencies. The unique design of the school site throws down some challenges. Despite this, leaders and governors have meticulously risk assessed all possibilities so that everyone is kept safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers are not always clear about how to implement the curriculum through approaches rooted in evidence. Consequently, pupils do not learn securely the knowledge they need in some subject areas. Leaders need to develop staff's pedagogy so that they all deliver the school's curriculum effectively.
- Assessment is not well matched to the curriculum. It is not focused enough on checking if pupils are remembering key component knowledge. Instead, leaders ask teachers to provide generic grades which are not useful to inform future teaching and create unnecessary workload. Leaders need to refine how best for teachers to check that pupils are successfully learning the taught 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2017.

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	123124
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10211415
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dr Steve Taylor
Headteacher	Helen France
Website	www.aston-rowant.oxon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 and 10 February 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher joined the school in September 2019. Most of the governing body are new since the previous inspection.
- As a Church of England school, Aston Rowant is part of the Diocese of Oxford. Its most recent section 48 inspection was in June 2019.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair and vice chair. He held telephone conversations with a school improvement officer from the local authority and an adviser from the diocese.
- The inspection team carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history.

- Pupils across the school were observed reading to a familiar adult by the lead inspector.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors spoke with staff and pupils. The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leads to examine records and actions. This included sampling a range of safeguarding documentation. The team inspector reviewed checks on the safer recruitment of adults.
- Inspectors talked to pupils from different year groups about their learning and experiences at school.
- The views of staff, pupils and parents were gathered through discussions and Ofsted's online surveys.
- The inspection team scrutinised a range of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation and school development priorities, policies, curriculum documents and minutes of governors' meetings.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Katherine Russell

Ofsted Inspector

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