

Ashcombe Primary School

Address: Earham Grove, Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, BS23 3JW

Unique reference number (URN): 144924

Inspection report: 24 March 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders regularly analyse rates of attendance. They build close relationships with parents and carers. This helps leaders provide personalised solutions to pupils who struggle to come to school. As a result, rates of attendance are improving. Leaders remove barriers to attendance. Mostly, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities get the support they need to attend well. Leaders recognise that there is further work to do to ensure that attendance continues to get better.

Overall, pupils behave very well. Staff have high expectations of behaviour. As a result, the school is calm and routines are established. Pupils are kind and polite to one another. Leaders have an accurate view of the behaviour and attendance of pupils. When incidents of behaviour occur, including bullying, school leaders are quick to act. For example, they ensure that healing conversations take place. Those pupils who are affected are appropriately supported. Therefore, pupils have a positive view of behaviour in the school. On occasion, there are incidents of low-level misbehaviour in classes. This is due to the learning activities that pupils complete not always being well matched to what they are able to do. As a result, some pupils lose focus.

Early years

Expected standard 

The Reception class provides a supportive and nurturing environment for children to begin their time in school. Staff build effective partnerships with parents and carers to support children to feel safe and secure. The early years curriculum is well planned. In focused teaching sessions, children learn the skills and knowledge they need to ensure they are ready for the next stage of their education.

There are robust systems in place to support the teaching of phonics. If children fall behind in their reading, they are quickly identified and support is put in place to help them keep up with their peers. This means that the number of children who achieve a good level of development is in line with the national average.

Routines are embedded. The behaviour of children is positive. Many children show sustained levels of attention on their chosen activities. Staff support children in their learning, with a focus on developing vocabulary. First-hand experiences, such as the class's worm farm, develop children's understanding of and fascination at the world. On occasion, staff do not make full use of every interaction with children. Where this happens, children who have secured their learning do not move on to more complex concepts quite as quickly as they might.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

The school and staff rightly pride themselves on the close relationships they have with pupils, parents and carers. This helps staff to swiftly identify any pupil who needs support. Staff help pupils feel safe and cared for. School leaders have introduced new systems that support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) or pupils who are

disadvantaged. Academic targets and expectations for these pupils are precise. Members of the SEND team regularly review the impact of the support pupils with SEND receive. Leaders have trained staff in how to adapt provision to enable pupils to do well. Where pupils need more specialist support, leaders provide it. For example, activities such as 'bucket time' support pupils to take turns and build vocabulary successfully. When necessary, the school's use of alternative provision is appropriate.

School leaders have a sharp focus on the use of funding for disadvantaged pupils. They have identified and supported pupils who need extra support linked to low levels of literacy on entry. Leaders provide further help for pupils who may have limited access to wider enrichment activities.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Pupils benefit from a well-planned programme for personal development and wellbeing. They have the opportunity to learn and reflect on the lives of others in society. In assemblies, pupils typically develop an understanding of healthy relationships and fundamental British values. For example, they can explain the importance of democracy. Pupils enthusiastically articulate their learning to their peers. For example, older pupils recently gave a powerful presentation on what it meant to be a suffragette.

Older pupils have the opportunity to carry out leadership roles and responsibilities. For example, pupils act as representatives for others in the school council. Sports leaders support the coaching of other pupils during lunchtime. The 'eco-team' is responsible for the school garden. The 'Sparks Club' provides a forum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This supports these pupils to bring about improvements in the school.

Pupils generally benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities. The 'Jill Dando newsroom' supports pupils who have an interest in journalism. The school choir helps pupils to build confidence by singing at local events and at residential homes. Pupils also enjoy a growing range of clubs, such as the book, drama and line dancing clubs. Overnight residential experiences build their confidence and resilience, especially for those whose first trip it is away from home.

The school ensures that pupils develop an age-appropriate understanding about how to stay safe online. Information updates to parents about online safety also help to reinforce this learning. When issues related to online activity do occur, the school adapts the curriculum to ensure that pupils learn from any incident.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Too many pupils leave Ashcombe Primary School without the skills and knowledge they need to be ready for the next stage of their education. There is a lack of ambition in the work that pupils complete. This is reflected in low achievement in aspects of national assessments.

Pupils are taught a curriculum that is rich in knowledge. However, they do not always remember what they have learned. This prevents them from building knowledge securely. Furthermore, too many pupils make errors in basic grammar and spelling. Sometimes, pupils struggle with handwriting. Staff do not consistently identify or correct these mistakes. This means that pupils continue in their learning with gaps in their knowledge.

Many pupils achieve well in the Year 1 phonics check. Results are consistently in line with the national average. This supports pupils to have the skills they need to be confident readers.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

The quality of teaching is variable. Where teaching is less effective, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Staff do not always have the subject knowledge to model learning effectively. Opportunities for pupils to practise their writing across the wider curriculum are limited. Furthermore, teachers do not always check pupils' understanding with precision. This means mistakes and misconceptions persist in pupils' work. Also, the work that pupils complete is not matched to what teachers know about pupils. As a result, some pupils do not secure the knowledge they need, while other pupils complete work that lacks ambition. As a result, pupils sometimes do not achieve as well as they should. The actions that school leaders have taken to address this have not been swift or precise enough to lead to meaningful improvement. This means that pupils continue to have gaps in their knowledge. Pupils' writing is not of a high enough quality. This is impacting on their progress through the curriculum.

The curriculum is well designed. It is broad and ambitious. The curriculum identifies the key knowledge and skills pupils should learn. Staff help pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the same curriculum as their peers.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

The actions that leaders have taken to improve provision have not been precise or swift enough. Furthermore, leaders' monitoring of areas of the school's development lacks the rigour needed to understand if actions are having the intended impact. Leaders work with the trust to make decisions that put pupils first. Leaders have identified that areas of the school's provision need further development.

Governors and trustees bring a range of expertise and provide effective challenge and support to leaders. Those responsible for governance ensure the school meets its statutory duties. However, their impact is hindered because of the lack of rigour in monitoring the impact of improvement strategies.

School and trust leaders have a deep understanding of the needs of pupils and of the local community. The pastoral team is quick to work with families who need support. Parents and carers are highly positive about the school and staff. Parents appreciate the open-door policy and explain that the school makes their children feel part of a community.

Staff feel well supported. They appreciate the range of professional development opportunities available to them, including working with colleagues from across the trust.

Staff say that leaders take into account their workload and wellbeing when making decisions. Teachers who are new to the profession are well supported.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils enjoy attending Ashcombe Primary School. While this is a large school, pupils are warmly greeted each morning by staff who know their individual names. This helps pupils to feel safe and cared for. Routines are established, and pupils quickly settle into their classes. This demonstrates that they are keen to learn. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are disadvantaged are well looked after through the school's pastoral support. Pupils get meaningful support to help them attend well.

Over time, pupils have not achieved as well as they should. The quality of teaching is variable. The tasks that pupils are set, at times, lack ambition. Systems to check pupils' understanding lack precision. This means that the work pupils complete does not always reflect what they are able to do. Leaders sometimes do not monitor their initiatives successfully. This can leave pupils with gaps in their knowledge. They are not always ready for the next stage of their education.

Pupils across the school behave well. They are kind and show polite manners to one another. Incidents of bullying are rare. If they do occur, pupils know there are staff who will support them. Worry boxes in classrooms support pupils to tell teachers how they are feeling.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities the school creates so that they build a sense of belonging. For example, this happens during 'Friday team time'. Equally, 'adventure days' to the woods and the beach mean pupils build confidence and achieve well outside of the classroom. School clubs, such as gymnastics, football and choir, help pupils to develop their skills and talents.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure teaching helps pupils to improve the accuracy in their writing across subjects, particularly in handwriting, spelling, grammar and punctuation, so that pupils secure the knowledge they need to be well prepared for the next stage.
 - Leaders should make sure that teaching provides appropriate ambition for pupils who have already secured the intended learning.
 - Leaders should ensure that assessment is used more effectively to inform future learning, so pupils secure more of the knowledge and skills that they need.
 - Leaders should ensure that they implement rigorous monitoring systems to check the impact of their improvement strategies.
 - Leaders should continue their work to remove barriers to attendance and secure sustained improvements in overall attendance and persistent absence.
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About this inspection

This school is part of the Kaleidoscope multi-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), Simon Marriott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dr Tristan Cogan.

The chair of the board of governors in this school is Katie Robertson.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders, the special educational needs coordinator team, the CEO, the chair of governors and the chair of the board of trustees.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

There is a before- and after-school club for pupils who attend the school.

The school makes use of 2 unregistered alternative provisions and one registered alternative provision.

Headteacher: Chris Penny

Lead inspector:

James Gentile, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspectors:

Wendy Hanrahan, Ofsted Inspector

Catherine Beeks, Ofsted Inspector

Tracy Hannon, Ofsted Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 24 March 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

624

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

630

Well above average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

21.79%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

3.37%

Close to average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

6.73%

Well below average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Close to average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	53%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	55%	62%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	56%	61%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	67%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	65%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	68%	74%	Below
2022/23 (final)	68%	73%	Close to average

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	66%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	68%	72%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	68%	72%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	62%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	68%	73%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	67%	74%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	73%	73%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	35%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	37%	47%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	27%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	38%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	54%	62%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	54%	63%	Close to average

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2023/24 (final)	45%	62%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	49%	59%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	45%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	51%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	49%	61%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	41%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	57%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	35%	68%	-33 pp
2024/25 (revised)	37%	69%	-32 pp
2023/24 (final)	27%	67%	-40 pp
2022/23 (final)	38%	66%	-29 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	54%	80%	-25 pp
2024/25 (revised)	54%	81%	-27 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	80%	-34 pp
2022/23 (final)	59%	78%	-19 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	49%	78%	-29 pp
2024/25 (revised)	49%	78%	-30 pp
2023/24 (final)	45%	78%	-32 pp
2022/23 (final)	51%	77%	-26 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	50%	80%	-30 pp
2024/25 (revised)	49%	81%	-32 pp
2023/24 (final)	41%	79%	-39 pp
2022/23 (final)	57%	79%	-22 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	5.9%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	6.7%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.9%	5.9%	Above

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	14.8%	13.3%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	19.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	20.5%	16.2%	Above

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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