

# Inspection of Aspire School

Vellum Drive, Sittingbourne, Kent ME10 5DA

---

Inspection dates:	18 and 19 March 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Outstanding</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Neil Dipple. This school is part of Bourne Alliance 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), Diane Browning, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neil Peterson.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The cheerful, eager sounds as pupils arrive at school illustrate how happy they are to be there. The friendly welcome from adults supports pupils calmly into school. Staff skilfully manage these sorts of transitions throughout the day in a host of helpful ways. Pupils know what to expect and when, helping them to focus their energy and attention on their learning.

The school's mission, 'Individual for all, aspirational for everyone', is mostly well realised. This ambition covers all aspects of pupils' learning and development. The individual needs of the youngest children are exceptionally well met. The school takes care to provide the appropriate environment and approaches for pupils of all ages. The curriculum is used flexibly to both promote pupils' 'special interests' or strengths and support their next steps. All of this ensures that pupils achieve well.

Many pupils develop impressive levels of focus, attention and control. The school understands the root causes some pupils have in managing their emotions. It uses this understanding well to help pupils achieve the school's high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are understandably thrilled with the recent developments to the outdoor play areas. These have greatly enhanced breaktimes and made them much more positive occasions.

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

As the school has continued to grow, the range and complexity of pupils' needs have changed. In response, the school has achieved much in developing a curriculum that is fit for purpose. It has created three distinct 'pathways'. Each pathway is designed to meet pupils' needs and stages of development, whatever their age. This ranges from pupils just beginning to engage and focus their attention on learning activities to pupils studying different academic subjects.

The school's chosen approach is established most consistently and securely in pathways one and two. This accounts for most of the school. Pupils make demonstrable gains in their learning from communication, to mathematics, to their emotional development. Staff use careful checks of how well pupils are doing to target next steps.

The pathways are especially well embedded in early years. Inviting, sensory activities motivate and inspire children to increasingly engage. Adults skilfully promote the attributes that help prepare children for future learning. As soon as pupils of all ages are ready to begin accessing the next pathway, they are supported to do so. The school continues to work with all staff to establish everywhere the consistency of high-quality practice that is already evident in early years.

In pathway three, the school has identified an aspirational range of what it wants pupils to learn across subjects. Pupils are enthused by the range of topics and keen to share what they have learned. There is more to do, however, to refine choices about exactly what pupils need to learn to get better in some subjects.

There is real expertise in early reading. It has a high profile at all levels from early years onwards. When ready, pupils benefit from the well-taught phonics programme, with some quickly learning to sound out new words. Staff target individual support for those who need extra help, however long the journey takes. Pathway three pupils were engrossed in their books as they made the most of a relaxing library session.

Pupils usually listen well to adults and follow the familiar routines. The focus and attention of early years children in pathway two are impressive. Across the school, staff sensitively adapt their demands according to pupils' particular needs. This ensures that expectations of pupils' behaviour remain high but attainable. Pupils' obvious enjoyment of school means attendance rates are high and continue to rise. The school uses multiple strategies to engage with parents and carers, valuing the many close partnerships it has formed. The school still strives to strengthen these links further.

Nurturing pupils' personal, social and emotional development threads through every aspect of school life. The provision links closely to pupils' individual learning plans and therapeutic needs. The school develops pupils' understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. A rich and varied offer dovetails pupils' own desires and interests with efforts to provide a broad range of experiences. These new opportunities range from cathedral visits to skiing. Pupils share their views through the school council and trust parliament. Those with particular talents, or just an enthusiasm, can learn a musical instrument or participate in inter-school sports.

The trust and the school work constructively together to share expertise and secure improvements. There is a healthy balance of oversight, challenge and support. The well-being of leaders and staff is a genuine focus at all levels. There is a strong sense of unity and teamwork.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Beyond early years, there are small variabilities in how well the curriculum is taught. This means that some pupils do not secure the intended learning as well as they could. The school and the trust should ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to implement the intended curriculum pathway approaches as expected.
- There is more to do in some subjects in pathway three to select the subject content that will help pupils make the best possible gains in their learning. This means that some pupils do not make as much progress through the curriculum as they could. The school and the trust should ensure that the most important aspects of what pupils should know and be able to do to progress well through the curriculum are clearly defined.

## 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.

## 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>	147833
<b>Local authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	10341882
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	191
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Neil Peterson
<b>CEO of the trust</b>	Diane Browning
<b>Headteacher</b>	Neil Dipple
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.aspire-ba-mat.org.uk">www.aspire-ba-mat.org.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	11 and 12 October 2022, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Aspire School is part of Bourne Alliance Multi-Academy Trust.
- The school provides for pupils with autism and/or speech language and communication needs. All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school provides a before-school club.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection team held discussions with the headteacher, the assistant headteacher, other leaders and staff. They also spoke with the CEO and the deputy CEO of the trust. The lead inspector met with the chair of the board of trustees, the chair of the local governing body and another governor.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and the school's pathway one. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and pathways.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed in the online inspection surveys returned by staff. They also took account of the responses submitted by parents and carers to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.

### **Inspection team**

Clive Dunn, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Caroline Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Emma Law	Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

© Crown copyright 2025