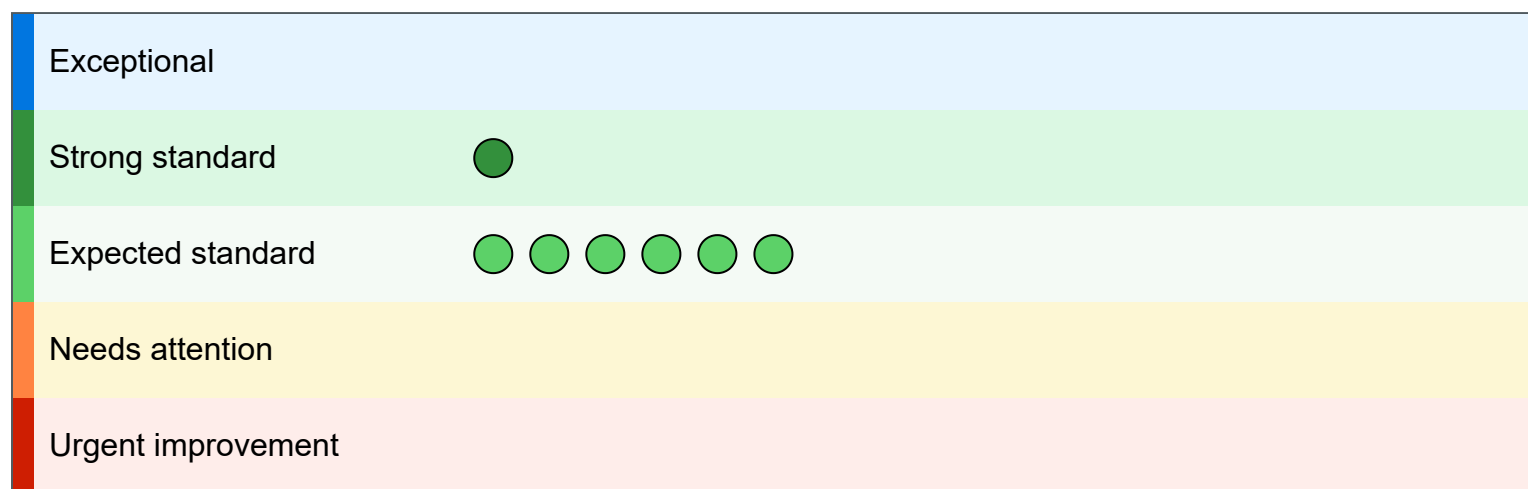


Ad Astra Infant School

Address: Sherborn Crescent, Canford Heath, Poole, Dorset, BH17 8AP

Unique reference number (URN): 141755

Inspection report: 28 April 2026



✔ **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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Inclusion runs through the fabric of Ad Astra Infant School. Leaders are relentless in their drive to ensure that pupils who face barriers to their learning, including those who are known or previously known to social care, achieve well and thrive academically and personally.

Leaders work closely and diligently with parents and carers at the earliest possible stage in order to identify any barriers or special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) that the pupils have and find 'ways in' to their education. In response to their ever-changing needs, the school has established 'pups' and 'otters' class where pupils benefit from a bespoke curriculum that is ambitious and meets their needs well. Leaders proactively seek guidance from a wide range of external professionals, such as educational psychologists and occupational therapists, to ensure they have the best provision in place for their pupils.

Pastoral support is of a high quality. Expert staff support pupils to develop and manage their emotions and behaviour in a sensitive manner. This enables pupils with SEND and those with other challenges to learn successfully alongside their peers. For example, sensory circuits at the start of the day help pupils to be ready to learn.

Leaders rigorously check the impact of the school's provision on pupils. They make highly effective use of this information to adapt the curriculum and the pastoral support that pupils receive. Leaders use additional funding creatively to ensure that the most vulnerable pupils benefit. Therefore, disadvantaged pupils achieve well and participate fully in all aspects of school life.

Expected standard ●

Achievement

Expected standard ●

Leaders ensure that pupils learn the important basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. The focus on developing secure pencil grip, letter formation and handwriting is having a positive impact on pupils' work. Pupils achieve well. From their starting points, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities progress well through the curriculum.

Pupils' achievement in phonics is a strength. Published outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check over time are significantly above the national average. Pupils learn and remember new sounds confidently. As a result, pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, become fluent readers, which prepares them well for their next steps.

Pupils generally develop appropriate knowledge and skills across the curriculum. In subjects such as science, pupils can explain concepts such as 'habitat' and 'microhabitat'. However, occasionally pupils struggle to connect their learning with content they have been taught

previously, which limits how well they are able to build on their learning over time in some subjects.

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

The school promotes the importance of pupils attending regularly in many different ways. Leaders analyse attendance information with rigor. They identify trends and patterns over time. As a result of the positive and trusting relationships staff build with families, staff provide the necessary support to ensure that all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, rarely miss a day of school. Pupils' attendance is above the national average as a result of this work.

The school's approach to managing pupils' behaviour is based on positive relationships. Pupils are keen to learn. Staff understand and generally apply the school's behaviour policy appropriately. Pupils typically respond well to this, leading to a calm and purposeful environment in which they can learn without disruption.

Pupils are polite and kind. Children in the Reception Year learn to take turns and work together as a team. Older pupils play well together during social times. Staff provide the right support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so they are fully included in playground games. Pupils know that everyone is equal. They do not tolerate any form of discrimination. Pupils trust staff to help them with any worries or concerns. The class 'worry box' also provides another avenue to communicate any issues with staff.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed a broad and ambitious curriculum. They have an accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching. Leaders regularly review how well pupils are learning the curriculum, and make timely improvements where needed.

Leaders prioritise the development of key skills, including communication, phonics, letter formation and number. Reading is a clear focus. Effective phonics teaching helps pupils to develop their reading skills. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Staff quickly spot those at risk of falling behind. Pupils receive the support they need to keep up.

Leaders are aspirational for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers adapt learning to meet pupils' individual needs effectively. This includes providing additional resources, such as sound mats or pre-teaching important knowledge to pupils with SEND. This enables these pupils to learn and succeed.

The curriculum is typically taught well. Leaders ensure that teachers have the necessary expertise to teach the curriculum effectively. Generally, staff check that pupils understand important and new concepts. However, on occasion these checks are not as precise as they need to be to enable pupils to build on their knowledge in some wider curriculum subjects.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum for the early years. Nothing is left to chance. The curriculum is well designed and sets out the most important knowledge and skills children need to learn. This builds over time and across all 7 areas of the early years curriculum. For example, children develop their knowledge of counting which progresses to finding one more and one less.

Reading and communication are prioritised. Children learn to read as soon as they start at school. They learn letters and sounds and begin to build words. Alongside this, children develop a love of reading. They enjoy listening to stories and learning about the different themes. Staff work skilfully to help pre-verbal children develop different means of communication.

Staff build secure relationships with children and their families. They identify any challenges families face and work together to overcome these. Staff ensure that children are well cared for. Adaptations to both the curriculum and the classroom support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. Consequently, children achieve well from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders, trustees and staff are proud to be part of the school's community. 'Children first' is front and centre of the decisions leaders make. Leaders and trustees have an accurate and informed understanding of the school's strengths and priorities going forward. They are never complacent but determined to provide a high-quality education for all of their pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Trustees hold school leaders to account effectively. They provide an appropriate level of challenge and support. Established processes and reporting systems ensure those responsible for governance meet their statutory duties, for example in safeguarding pupils and safer recruitment processes.

Staff are unanimously positive about the school and leaders. They feel very well supported to manage their workload and wellbeing, including early career teachers. Staff value the purposeful and carefully planned professional learning programme which is aligned with the school's priorities and develops staff expertise.

Parents and carers are unrelenting in their support for the school. They value the community feel that exists and the 'rich' curriculum that children learn. One comment, which sums up the views of many, was: 'Ad Astra have the children at heart. They care about the children, and the education they provide.'

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The school's programme for pupils' personal development is interwoven throughout the curriculum. The school's values underpin this offer. The focus is to ensure that all pupils,

including those who are disadvantaged, experience a breadth of exciting opportunities, builds confidence and opens doors to new experiences. For example, many pupils learn to play a musical instrument.

Pupils learn the difference between right and wrong. They know that they can influence change and make a difference in their community. Visits to the local residential home and senior citizen afternoon tea events enable pupils to develop their role as responsible citizens. Pupils can lead parades through the local area, championing children's rights. Within school, wellbeing ambassadors provide 'top tips' on the importance of sleep.

The school's personal, social and health education curriculum helps pupils to develop important life skills. Pupils know that trust and respect are important 'ingredients' that make a good friendship. They learn that consent and permission are essential. For example, pupils know that they need to ask a friend before they give them a hug. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in the real and online world. They know they should not give away any personal details online and understand how to cross a road safely.

Interesting opportunities beyond the classroom enrich pupils' day-to-day experiences. Staff skilfully ensure that all pupils benefit from the school's wider offer. For example, staff adapt the school's sports day for pupils in 'pups' and 'otters' class and run clubs for individual pupils who struggle in larger groups.

Pupils learn how to manage their own wellbeing through the 'trick box'. This supports pupils to develop independent strategies to develop positive mental health and wellbeing. The pastoral team monitors pupils closely. Additional help is provided for pupils who struggle.

Pupils have an impressive understanding of fundamental British values. They know that important key figures, including Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, stood up to racism. Pupils experience a democratic process through voting for their peers on the school council. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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

Pupils arrive full of enthusiasm and with a desire to learn. Caring and respectful relationships between staff and pupils help them to settle quickly into their morning routines. Staff know pupils for the unique individuals they are. Where necessary, they patiently support them and remove any challenges so that pupils across the school, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged, get off to a great start to the school day. This helps pupils to feel confident and develop a real sense of belonging.

Pupils display positive attitudes to learning and achieve well. They are keen to share their ideas with their peers and talk with enthusiasm about their learning. Published outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check over time are significantly above the national average. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. This begins in the early years where children follow the well-established routines. Children know and understand the school's

approach to managing behaviour. They feel proud when they move their 'peg up' for making excellent choices. Bullying is rare. Pupils understand the difference between falling out and bullying. They are confident that staff would address any worries or concerns quickly. As a result, pupils feel safe and cared for.

Pupils attend well. Leaders are unapologetic for their insistence on high attendance. Where families need additional support, staff work sensitively with them.

Pupils participate in a wide range of enrichment opportunities. These include 'aspirations day', care home visits and a farm visit. A wide range of projects and initiatives has a tangible impact on pupils' sense of fairness, responsibility and citizenship. Pupils understand key rights and help others to understand their rights, such as environmental campaigns, letters to the local member of parliament and community projects. These experiences help pupils form a well-developed moral compass and contribute positively to their community.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to develop staff expertise so that they incisively check pupils' learning to identify gaps and build pupils' knowledge sequentially.
 - Leaders should further develop pupils' secure and detailed knowledge across the wider curriculum.
-

About this inspection

This school is part of Teach Poole 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, Kate Carter, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Val Arbon.

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, inclusion leader, trust leaders and a group of staff. The lead inspector met with trustees and the chief executive officer.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school does not use any alternative provision.

Headteacher: Clare Tantrum

Lead inspector:

Wendy D'Arcy, His Majesty's Inspector


Team inspectors:

Christine Bulmer, Ofsted Inspector

Claire Mirams, 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 28 April 2026

School and pupil context**Total pupils**

253

Close to 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

270

Close to 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)

20.55%

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

4.74%

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

19.37%

Above average

What does this mean?

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

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Above 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).

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 (3 term)	4.8%	5.2%	Close to average
2023/24 (3 term)	5.6%	5.5%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	6.3%	5.9%	Close to average

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 (3 term)	8.8%	13.0%	Below
2023/24 (3 term)	17.2%	14.6%	Close to average
2022/23 (3 term)	19.0%	16.2%	Close to average

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

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