

Inspection of Amherst Primary School

Guelles Road, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 2DF

Inspection dates: 19 and 20 March 2025

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development and welfare	Excellent
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's motto of 'every child, every chance, every day' reflects its high expectations for all pupils to succeed regardless of their starting points. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum, particularly in reading and writing.

Children make a positive start to school. They quickly learn routines and settle happily in the well-resourced early years environment, where learning is engaging and fun. The school's values of kindness, respect, confidence, resilience, honesty and open-mindedness help pupils to understand the importance of good behaviour. In the classroom, pupils engage well and work hard. Most pupils play together well and feel that the playground is a place where they are safe and happy. On the rare occasions bullying or discriminatory behaviour may occur, pupils know the school will address it.

The school promotes pupils' personal development exceptionally well. Deliberately planned activities enhance and enrich pupils' learning. A range of clubs such as softball, boxing, rugby, baking and sewing broaden pupils' talents and interests. Participation in clubs is especially high for disadvantaged pupils and those with additional learning needs (ALN). Pupils also enjoy performing in the local Eisteddfod and are proud of their poetry award.

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

The Guernsey Education office and new school leadership have brought stability, following a period of staffing fragility and turbulence. The school has a clear and ambitious vision of what it wants for pupils, including pupils with ALN.

The school has designed a curriculum that is broad and ambitious. It provides pupils with the key knowledge they need and sets out the order in which they should learn it. For example, in physical education, younger pupils explore throwing and catching techniques. Older pupils build on these fundamental skills and apply them to different sports they learn, like hockey. In history, pupils confidently draw on their prior knowledge to explain the mummification process or key facts about the Egyptian pharaohs.

For the most part, teachers carefully explain tasks and use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding. For example, in mathematics, staff use resources well to help pupils develop a secure grasp of number. In the Reception Year, children reinforce their number recognition by adding one more or using mathematical language like 'numeral'. Older pupils build on this to add two-digit numbers. However, sometimes, teachers do not provide sufficient opportunity for pupils to extend their mathematical reasoning skills. As a result, some pupils do not develop the depth of knowledge in mathematics as well as they could. This contributes to some published outcomes remaining lower than average over time.

The school places a sharp focus on early reading. From the moment children join Reception, they learn the sounds that letters make. Children learn how to blend these sounds to read and write simple words and sentences. They practise reading with books that match the sounds they know. Staff provide effective support to any pupils that fall behind. As pupils' reading skills grow, so does their love of reading. The school provides books that reflect a wide range of cultures and families from across the world.

The school works closely with parents and carers and nurseries to gain an understanding of children's needs before they start in Reception. The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with ALN promptly and effectively. Staff set clear, specific targets for these pupils and plan activities that help them work towards achieving their goals.

In all classes, positive relationships between pupils and staff help pupils to be confident and happy. Most pupils behave well and value their education. The school has clear and consistent systems to monitor pupils' attendance. It provides effective support to break down the barriers that make coming to school difficult for some.

Pupils benefit from an excellent personal, social and health education. It prepares them exceptionally well for life in and beyond the classroom. They learn how to keep safe online and personal safety in an age-appropriate way. The school has attained the Rights Respecting Schools Award at the gold level. As a result, pupils' knowledge of global issues, such as poverty, is strong. The pupil voice group is very active. Pupils' service to the community is commendable. They take the lead in organising charity work, beach clean and litter picks. Pupils thrive with other responsibilities as playground leaders, librarians or digital leaders. Residential visits support pupils to engage in adventurous activities, which help build their confidence.

Staff feel supported, valued and love working at the school. They recognise the efforts of leaders to reduce their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

- Occasionally, the school does not give pupils sufficient opportunities to apply their mathematical knowledge to reasoning tasks. As a result, some pupils do not develop a secure level of mathematical understanding. The school should ensure that teaching enables pupils to develop mathematical reasoning skills that deepen their knowledge over time.

School details

Inspection number	10354387
Type of school	Primary
Age range of pupils	4-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	467
Appropriate authority	The States of Guernsey
Headteacher	Gary Hind
Website	www.amherstprimary.co.uk
Date of previous Ofsted inspection	Not previously inspected by Ofsted

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up his post in September 2024.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 35 of the Guernsey Education Law 1970.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with teachers, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, including the additional learning needs coordinator. The lead inspector spoke with the officers from the Education Office.

- The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to the Guernsey Parent Survey and talking to parents. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the questionnaires issued at the time of the inspection.

Inspection team

Gavin Summerfield, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sandy Hayes	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Lovett	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 in England. Ofsted has been commissioned by the States of Guernsey to inspect its schools.

© States of Guernsey copyright 2021