

Inspection of Pilton Infants' Academy

Abbey Road, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 1JU

Inspection dates:	20 and 21 May 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The head of school is John Mortimer. This school is part of Team 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), Ian Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Philippa Sue Wells.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Pilton Infants' Academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Pilton Infants' School to be outstanding for overall effectiveness, before it opened as Pilton Infants' Academy as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Pilton Infants' Academy are greeted warmly each morning by caring staff. Pupils are safe. They know that staff are always available to support them with any concerns.

The school environment is calm and purposeful. Pupils are respectful and welcoming towards visitors. A culture of kindness and mutual respect is evident throughout the school. The school has created learning characters, such as 'Bobby Bounceback', to support pupils to build emotional resilience to become independent learners. The school has high expectations for what pupils can do. Pupils rise to these expectations and achieve well.

The school provides a broad range of opportunities that enrich the curriculum and nurture pupils' talents and interests. For example, pupils sing at local care homes and at larger events such as the trust 'proms'. Tailored activities, such as gardening and cooking, help develop pupils' independence and confidence.

Pupils gain a secure understanding of how to live healthy lives. They explain the importance of dental hygiene and a balanced diet. Older pupils see themselves as role models to younger pupils.

Parents and carers value the individual care their children receive and appreciate how well staff know and understand each pupil's needs.

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

The school has designed a well-structured and ambitious curriculum that is rich in knowledge. Pupils build their knowledge in manageable steps from Reception Year to Year 2. Pupils recall what they have learned knowledgeably and confidently. This means, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

The teaching of early reading is a strength. Knowledgeable staff reflect the school's ambition in how they teach phonics. Staff present sounds they want pupils to know with precision and clarity. Teaching is closely matched to pupils' needs. Staff skilfully check pupils' understanding before introducing new content. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified at an early stage. The school builds strong links with pre-schools and close partnerships with parents. Consequently, barriers to learning are identified promptly. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well from their individual starting points.

Across the curriculum, the school has identified the key vocabulary pupils need to understand and remember. Teachers have high expectations that pupils use this language when they respond to questions. This helps pupils to remember what they learn long term. For example, in mathematics, pupils knowledgeably and confidently explain how multiplication and division are inverse operations. British values are also effectively woven

through the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a strong understanding of fairness and equality. For instance, they explain with maturity and conviction about the under-recognition of Mary Anning's scientific work. However, in some subjects, teachers do not consistently pick up on and address pupils' misconceptions in their learning. As a result, some pupils repeat basic errors and pupils' misconceptions persist.

Children in the early years make a strong start to their education. There is a clear focus on developing language and communication. Staff also foster a love of reading from the time children start school. Children benefit from enriching experiences, such as trips to the town centre to learn about local history. However, sometimes the activities chosen to help children learn through play do not consider what children already know. The activities do not connect well with the taught curriculum. This means children do not secure important knowledge as well as they could.

Personal development is a strength of the school. Opportunities such as partnerships with a school in India help pupils to develop a broader understanding of different cultures. Pupils learn about democracy in meaningful ways, including voting for school council representatives. Pupils also learn about the importance of supporting the community with visits to the school from the air-ambulance and fire brigade.

Pupils behave well and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. Low-level disruption in classrooms is rare. Attendance is improving due to the school's swift and supportive responses to concerns about absence.

Governance is effective. Trustees and members of the local governing body provide both support and challenge to school and trust leaders. They maintain a clear oversight of the school's priorities and take active steps to promote staff well-being and manage workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, staff do not consistently pick up on or address pupils' misconceptions in learning. This means that sometimes pupils repeat basic errors and misconceptions persist. When this occurs, pupils do not learn the curriculum as well as they could. The trust needs to ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise to identify and address misconceptions before they become embedded.
- In the early years, the quality of the activities to help children learn are variable. This means that opportunities for children to deepen or consolidate their knowledge are less effective than they could be. The trust should ensure that children's learning is maximised in all activities, so that they achieve well and are ready for the next stage of their education.

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

Unique reference number	150074
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10379008
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	178
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Philippa Sue Wells
CEO of the trust	Ian Thomas
Head of School	John Mortimer
Website	www.pilton-inf.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is part of Team Multi-Academy Trust. It joined the trust in November 2023.
- The school does not currently make use of 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.

- 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 and history. For each deep dive, the 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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, subject leaders, the trust CEO, trustees and members of the local governing body.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspectors gathered parents' views by considering the responses to Ofsted Parent View and by talking to parents. The inspectors also reviewed responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

James Gentile, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Andrew Lovett

Ofsted Inspector

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