

Inspection of Wharton CofE Primary School

Greville Drive, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 3EP

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They treat each other and adults with kindness and respect. Pupils spoke of the school as being one big family where everyone is welcome. They feel safe and are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns. The school ethos of 'do everything in love' is the golden thread that runs through all that they do.

The school is a place of calm where pupils meet the high expectations that staff set for them. Pupils enjoy playtime. They appreciate the playground leaders and anti-bullying ambassadors for their support and advice. Routines are well established from the moment that children arrive in the Reception Year.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievements. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), work hard to rise to these aspirations. The changes that the school has made to the curriculum since the previous inspection has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Typically, current pupils and children in the early years achieve well.

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

Since the last inspection, the school has swiftly improved its curriculum. This in turn is ensuring that current pupils know and remember more of their learning. Despite these efforts, the unvalidated data in the 2024 key stage 2 data showed that pupils' attainment in reading, writing, and maths was below the national average. This is due to the weaknesses in the previous curriculum. The 2024 Year 6 cohort did not have enough time with the new curriculum to catch up.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. Pupils' learning in most subjects is carefully mapped out from the early years to Year 6. Staff are clear on exactly what pupils need to know and the order in which they should learn subject content. Staff present subject matter clearly and make learning engaging and exciting. As a result of this positive work, current pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well.

In a small number of subjects, the school has not finalised its curriculum thinking. In these subjects, the school has not set out the fundamental knowledge that pupils need to know and when this should be taught. Due to this, and weaknesses with the previous curriculum, some gaps remain in pupils' knowledge. This means that some pupils struggle to retain new learning as they do not have the solid foundations on which to build.

The school has developed the teaching of reading, especially phonics. This has led to dramatic improvements in younger pupils gaining the phonics knowledge that they need to progress well through the reading curriculum. Early years staff promote a love of stories, rhymes and books. The phonics programme is delivered effectively. Well-trained staff ensure that any pupils needing catch-up support receive it promptly. The books that pupils read are well matched to their reading ability. As a result, most pupils are fluent readers by Year 2.

Staff are highly positive and proud to work at the school. Middle leaders spoke of the positive impact that this has had on pupils' enjoyment and knowledge across the curriculum. Staff are equally well supported to understand and identify the needs of pupils with SEND. They have received purposeful training and as a result address and meet the needs of these pupils extremely well.

Pupils work well together. They support each other and have positive relationships with adults in school. Pupils are eager to learn and challenge themselves. There is a 'have a go' attitude with most pupils believing they can and will achieve anything that they put their minds to. This starts in the Reception class where children learn to focus and be resilient.

The attendance of pupils in school has historically been low. However, due to the school's work, the attendance of pupils currently at the school is improving. The school nurtures those pupils whose attendance falls below the school's high expectations. Governors have a tenacious oversight of the attendance figures and ensure that persistent absenteeism continues to reduce.

The school's approach to pupils' personal development is comprehensive. Pupils learn about mental health, staying safe and fundamental British values, such as democracy. They apply these lessons in real-life contexts, such as voting for pupil leaders and holding roles like junior safety officers and well-being ambassadors. These positions make a positive contribution to the work of the school. For example, the school council recently influenced changes to the lunchtime menu.

Governors have the necessary skills to be able to challenge and support appropriately. They have ensured that the school has made great strides since the previous inspection. Governors are ambitious for the pupils of Wharton and have high expectations for what pupils can achieve.

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, the school has not identified the fundamental knowledge that pupils should learn. In these subjects, some pupils do not learn to the depth that they could and struggle to retain the most important knowledge. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in these remaining subjects to ensure pupils build a more detailed understanding of subject topics and concepts.
- Due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge. This makes it difficult for them to benefit fully from the new curriculum content. The school should identify and address the gaps in pupils' knowledge so that

they have strong foundations on which to build new learning and they are well-prepared for the next stage of their learning.

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	135635
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10314034
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sue Tomlinson
Headteacher	Natalie Tomlinson
Website	www.wharton.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	17 and 18 November 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This Church of England school is part of the Diocese of Chester. Its last section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in June 2023. The next section 48 inspection is due by the end of 2028.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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 educational provision.

- Inspectors spoke with leaders and with members of staff. The lead inspector held discussions with members of the governing body, including the chair. They also spoke with representatives of the diocese and the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics, history and physical education. For each deep dive, they held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors discussed the curriculum in some other curriculum subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors reviewed samples of pupils' work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- 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 reviewed a range of documents, including records of governing body and interim executive board meetings; leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. They considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke with some parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Julie Clayton

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