

Inspection of Wharton CofE Primary School

Greville Drive, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 3EP

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school. They benefit from warm and caring relationships with staff which help them to feel safe.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and they work hard in their lessons to meet leaders' and teachers' high expectations. That said, some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not get the support that they need to catch up with reading.

Most pupils behave well. Pupils said that although there are occasional arguments on the playground, they are dealt with by staff straight away. Similarly, pupils are confident that staff would sort out any concerns that they reported about bullying.

Pupils appreciate the extra support that they receive from staff in the 'ELSA' room to help them with their emotions and feelings. However, some pupils who struggle to regulate their own behaviour do not receive appropriate support to access a sufficiently broad curriculum.

Pupils, including children in the early years, learn about the importance of treating everyone with respect. They are proud of their efforts to help others by collecting donations for a local food bank. Pupils are looking forward to the return to a full calendar of enrichment activities. Pupils in Year 6 spoke enthusiastically about their recent trip to a local museum.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is suitably broad and ambitious for all pupils, including those with SEND. Subject leaders have had training to better understand and carry out their roles. However, the quality of guidance that they provide to help teachers deliver the curriculum effectively varies between subjects.

In some subjects, such as mathematics and science, subject leaders provide clear guidance to teachers to help teachers understand how to teach the curriculum. The curriculums in these subjects have been implemented consistently well from early years to Year 6 so that pupils can achieve well. Well-trained teaching assistants support pupils with their learning and provide them with extra help when it is needed.

Curriculum plans in foundation subjects are not as well developed. In some of these subjects, although it is clear what pupils should be able to do by the end of each year, leaders have not identified or ordered the building blocks of knowledge that pupils should know. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan the next steps in pupils' learning.

Leaders place an important emphasis on making sure that pupils learn to read. Children in the Reception class learn sounds and letters soon after they join the

school. Most staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme in a consistent manner. Teachers make sure that most of the books that pupils are given to practise their reading are matched carefully to the sounds that they know. This helps pupils to gain confidence in their reading ability. That said, pupils, including children in the early years, who fall behind in reading, do not receive the focused support that they need to catch up soon enough. This means that some pupils are not fluent and confident readers by the end of Year 2. Added to this, some older pupils lack the confidence to read independently.

Leaders have started to improve their systems and approaches to make sure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified as early as possible. Teachers have been trained recently in how to adapt their approaches so that pupils with SEND can access a full curriculum. However, weaknesses in leaders' systems in the past have resulted in delays, both in the time taken by staff to identify the needs of this group of pupils and access to appropriate support.

Over time, leaders have not ensured that pupils who struggle to manage their own behaviour can benefit from specialist support. However, this is beginning to improve. More recently, leaders have ensured that some staff have been able to access specialist training. This means that they can support pupils with their emotional well-being and help them to successfully regulate their own behaviour. Typically, the atmosphere in the school is calm, welcoming and purposeful. During lessons, pupils can get on with their learning without distraction.

Leaders plan plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of the world in which they live. Pupils talk enthusiastically about religious festivals, such as how Diwali is celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs.

The leadership team has recently returned to full capacity after a period of considerable instability. This situation has resulted in concerns from a number of parents and carers. More recently, leaders have prioritised areas for improvement appropriately and are acting to ensure that they address parents' concerns.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, governors have offered support to school leaders. However, members of the governing body have not focused enough on ensuring that leaders take appropriate action to improve the quality of education, particularly for those pupils with SEND.

Staff appreciate that governors and leaders consider their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive culture. Leaders are fully trained to carry out their safeguarding roles effectively. They communicate regularly with the local authority to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families access appropriate support.

Staff receive suitable information and training so that they can spot the signs that may indicate that a pupil may be suffering or at risk from harm. This includes when pupils may be at risk from peer-on-peer abuse.

Leaders plan many opportunities, such as visits from the fire service and community police officers, to help pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, curriculum plans do not identify the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. This means that teachers are hindered in their attempts to design learning that helps pupils to build on what they already know. Leaders should ensure that curriculum plans outline the necessary building blocks that pupils should know. This will help teachers to plan learning and deliver curriculums that support pupils to know and remember more from the early years to Year 6.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils, including children in the early years, receive the support that they need if they fall behind in reading. This means that those pupils who do fall behind are unable to catch up quickly and fall further behind their peers. As a result, some pupils are unable to read confidently and fluently by the end of Year 2. Leaders should ensure that those pupils who require help with reading benefit from timely and appropriate help.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that pupils with SEND benefit from a good-quality education. In the past, leaders' systems have not ensured that pupils' needs have been identified in a timely manner. This has resulted in a delay in diagnoses and support for some pupils. Leaders and governors should continue to improve the provision and support for pupils with SEND, ensuring that this group of pupils benefit from the specialist help that they need to access a suitably broad curriculum. This includes keeping parents up to date with information about their children's progress.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135635
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10204399
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	329
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Reverend Tim Hanson
Headteacher	Natalie Tomlinson
Website	www.wharton.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 July 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Wharton CofE Primary School is part of the Diocese of Chester. The last section 48 inspection took place in November 2015.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- During the inspection, inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers, the safeguarding officer and other members of staff. They also spoke with pupils, both formally and informally, about their work. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body and had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority, a representative of the Diocese of Chester, a school improvement adviser and a member of the local authority Safeguarding Children in Education Service.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding, including the checks undertaken by leaders when recruiting staff.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey. There were no responses to Ofsted’s pupil survey.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science and computing. This included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, reviewing pupils’ work, discussions with teachers, and discussions with pupils. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a trusted adult. Inspectors also reviewed curriculum plans and pupils’ work in several other subjects.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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