

Inspection of a good school: Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery Academy

Station Road, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 1RJ

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 June 2023

Outcome

Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a clear sense of joy and positivity at Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery. Pupils are polite, friendly and behave well around school. They know what bullying is. They know that if they have a problem, the teachers will sort it out straight away.

Leaders have high ambitions for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders have recently changed the curriculum to sharpen the focus on what pupils need to know and remember. Leaders are determined that every pupil should get the help they need to succeed. As a result, pupils are learning more over time.

There is something for everyone in the school's extra-curricular offer. The range includes clubs, trips and outdoor adventures. Pupils explore in the forest school area, and they visit local forests and the local library. They attend clubs including cooking, archery and sport. In addition, the 'Team Ted' pupil group meets leaders to talk about how to improve the school. Pupils are proud of the beautiful nursery garden, which is just one example of a change they have made.

Parents say that staff make them feel that 'nothing is too big or small' in making sure their children are confident, happy and safe.

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

Senior leaders and the academy trust have made improvements at the school. They have made sure that all staff are well trained in early reading and that pupils who need additional support get help quickly. Leaders use reading assessments well. They make sure pupils have the right books so they can practise the sounds they learn in lessons every day. This supports pupils to rapidly gain fluency in reading.

Leaders have created an ambitious curriculum. They have reviewed all subjects to make sure that lessons focus on what pupils need to learn. In art and design, for example, pupils use sketchbooks to practise their painting and drawing skills, creating striking emotion drawings or pop art paintings. Similarly, in history, pupils make important connections in their understanding. For example, in the early years, children learn about family members, going on to learn about important historical figures, such as monarchs and the first female astronaut, in key stage 1. In a few subjects, changes are very new, and teachers do not always have the subject knowledge they need to deliver lessons to best effect. They do not check pupils' understanding quickly enough, and some pupils can become disengaged. This means that pupils' learning in these subjects slows.

Some subject leaders are new to their roles. They are enthusiastic but do not always have the knowledge and expertise to identify the exact improvements needed when planning subjects. As a result, there are some inconsistencies with teachers' delivery of some subjects in lessons.

The provision for pupils with SEND is well led. Leaders make good use of specialist teaching assistants in school, as well as external services. Any additional support is closely tracked by leaders to make sure it is effective. There is an efficient communication system to make sure everyone involved in supporting a pupil knows exactly what needs to be done. Consequently, needs are identified accurately, and pupils with SEND are very well supported.

Staff in the early years work together to support children in becoming independent, confident learners. The environment is calm, well organised and provides many opportunities for wonder and discovery, both indoors and outdoors. Clear routines and strong relationships mean that children enjoy learning and collaborating. Whether they are rescuing peas trapped in frozen ice, building structures or buying vegetables from a role-play shop, they work well together.

Pupils are reflective. They can talk about the values of love, peace, honesty and kindness as part of the Christian ethos of their school. They learn about different religions and know it is important to listen to each other. They take pride in being helpful and looking after the environment through eco-club. They perform and sing in Christmas and summer concerts, including at the local church.

Staff say that recent changes have made a positive difference to their workload and that leaders take their views on board when making changes. The academy trust provides strong support for the school through guidance, training and peer-support networks.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Everyone knows it is their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Staff know about contextual issues, such as trafficking and county lines, because they have regular training and updates. The pastoral team knows families well

and makes sure they get the help they need. Staff track concerns closely and act quickly when needed. The academy trust provides support through termly checks and guidance.

Pupils learn about personal boundaries and friendships in lessons. They feel safe at school. They know they can talk to their teachers if they are worried about anything.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to implement the curriculum to best effect. Where this is the case, pupils' learning slows. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills needed to implement the curriculum effectively.
- Some subject leaders do not have the expertise and knowledge to complete their roles as efficiently as they could. This means they are not precise in identifying any development points in the curriculum and in lessons. Leaders should provide appropriate training and/or support to ensure all subject leaders have the expertise and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery School to be good in June 2013.

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](#)' 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	146426
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10268601
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	298
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Johnny Anderson
Principal	Sarah Camacho
Website	thewhitchurchcofefederation.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school provides before- and after-school childcare in the main building.
- This is a voluntary controlled Church of England academy. The predecessor school received its most recent section 48 Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools in January 2019. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery Academy converted to become an academy school in March 2019. When its predecessor school, Whitchurch CofE Infant and Nursery School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.

Information about this inspection

- This is the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years lead and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector also met with representatives from the St Bart's Multi Academy Trust, including the chair of the board of trustees, the chief executive officer and the deputy chief executive officer. The inspector spoke to the chair of the local governing committee by telephone and met other members of the committee in person.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to staff, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also observed pupils reading to familiar adults.
- The inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects.
- To evaluate safeguarding, the inspector looked at the school's recruitment checks, the online safeguarding recording system, case studies and records of attendance and behaviour. The inspector also spoke to pupils and staff.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, as well as free-text responses from parents. The inspector also considered responses to Ofsted's pupil and parent surveys.

Inspection team

Johanne Clifton, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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