

Inspection of Witton Church Walk CofE Aided Nursery and Primary School

Church Walk, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5QQ

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
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 enjoy attending this harmonious school. They are caring towards each other and committed to being good citizens. Children in the early years learn the school's values of peace and love. These are lived out throughout the rest of the school in lessons and pupils' play.

The school sets high standards for pupils' behaviour. Staff respond effectively if there is any bullying or disruption to learning. Pupils feel safe in school. Parents and carers describe the school as 'warm and welcoming'. Staff encourage pupils 'to be their best selves'. Staff support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well.

Pupils are keen to do well in lessons and across the wide range of activities provided by the school. They take on responsibilities such as eco-warriors and curriculum helpers. Pupils enjoy learning musical instruments, taking part in competitive sports and acting on the stage as part of the wider curriculum.

The curriculum that pupils study is broad and ambitious. Children get off to a flying start in the Nursery and this is built on well throughout the school. In 2024, the standards that pupils reached at the end of Year 6 in English and mathematics were low. The school identified the reasons for this and made some appropriate changes. The pupils currently in the school are on track to achieve well.

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

At the previous inspection, the school was judged as requires improvement. Leaders quickly took effective action to tackle those aspects that needed to do better.

The school works well with parents and other agencies to support pupils' good attendance. Most pupils enjoy school, attend regularly and are punctual. A small number of pupils do not attend as often as they should. The school works successfully with these pupils and their families to help them to improve their attendance.

Children get off to a great start in learning to read in the early years. Staff are well trained to teach phonics. The school checks regularly how well pupils read, particularly those with SEND or who are new to the school and learning to speak English. It provides effective support to struggling readers. Pupils learn to read accurately and fluently. Older pupils at the early stages of learning to read use their phonics knowledge well. Across the school, pupils enjoy reading.

Although the school has made rapid improvements to the teaching of reading, pupils' handwriting has not had the same attention. Some children in Reception struggle to form their letters accurately. Activity choices, including the writing resources, do not routinely support children to build securely their writing skills. This affects their readiness for future learning in Year 1. In all other areas of learning, children in the early years achieve well. For instance, aspects of children's physical development, such as strengthening their core by practising fundamental movement skills, are promoted exceptionally well.

The school has recently revised its curriculum. It has used the support from external experts effectively. The curriculum has been designed carefully to help pupils connect their knowledge across the different subjects. Teachers check what pupils know and remember over time. They identify and meet the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly and effectively. They adapt lesson activities well so that these pupils can access the curriculum alongside their classmates. The curriculum is planned coherently from Years 1 to 6. However, subject curriculums do not consider well enough what children learn in the early years and how this is built upon in Year 1 and beyond.

Pupils recount what they have learned with enthusiasm. They particularly enjoy geography field work and initiatives in mathematics, such as 'Friday arithmetic'. Pupils work hard in lessons and want to do well. They are proud of their achievements, particularly their increasing knowledge of multiplication tables. They present their work with pride.

Pupils study all the subjects in the national curriculum. This learning is supported by memorable visits to the countryside, art galleries, museums and concerts. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe while out and about and online. They know about physical and emotional well-being, including the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise. Staff hold high expectations for what pupils can achieve.

The governing body was aware that some pupils did not achieve as well as they could. It commissioned an independent review to determine how well it holds the school to account for pupils' achievement. It implemented the recommendations from this review fully. The governing body now provides effective support and challenge to the school to raise the standards that pupils reach.

Staff value the support that the school provides. For example, they appreciate leaders' consideration for their workload and well-being when they make changes.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The early writing curriculum is not implemented consistently well in the early years. Activity choices and the use of writing resources do not help children to build their transcription skills well enough. This affects their overall achievement by the end of early years and their preparedness for learning in Year 1. The school should ensure that the curriculum is implemented effectively so that children develop strong and secure foundations in writing.

- The school's curriculum in Years 1 to 6 does not routinely take into account what children learn in the early years. This makes it difficult for staff to know if pupils have been taught the prerequisite knowledge and skills that they need for future learning. The school should ensure that checks on children's learning in the early years are robust. It should ensure that the curriculum in Years 1 to 6, across subjects, considers carefully children's learning in the early years.

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	111389
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10377941
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Cannon
Headteacher	Kathryn Magiera
Website	www.wittonchurchwalk.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	14 and 15 February 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The governing body provides a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- This is a Church of England school in the Diocese of Chester. The previous section 48 inspection was carried out in October 2019. The next section 48 inspection is due by the end of 2025.

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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff. They spoke with representatives of the diocese and the local authority as well as the school improvement partner. They also spoke with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school self-evaluation reports. Inspectors also considered reports from external professionals, including the local authority. Inspectors reviewed documentation related to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics, history and geography. They held discussions about the curriculum with leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work across all year groups.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also looked at pupils' written work in different subjects throughout the school.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Gill Jones, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Tom Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Neil Le Feuvre	Ofsted Inspector

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