

Wistaston Church Lane Academy

Church Lane, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 8EZ

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is beginning to improve, but it is not yet fast enough across almost all year groups and a range of subjects.
- Assessment information for 2016 for writing and mathematics shows slow progress at the end of key stage 2 and low attainment at the end of key stage 1 for a number of different groups of pupils.
- The acting headteacher and his senior leadership team have only recently been appointed. They have taken action to make improvements, but there has not yet been enough impact on pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders do not yet evaluate their actions precisely in order to secure strong progress for pupils.
- Although improving, teaching, learning and assessment are inconsistent in quality.
- Children in the early years do not make the rapid progress that they could, given their broadly typical starting points. Teachers are, however, beginning to use assessment more effectively to improve children's achievement, especially in mathematics.
- School leaders have not yet shown that they have used pupil premium funding effectively.

The school has the following strengths

- The new senior leaders are clear about the school's priorities for improvement and have devised strategies to deliver them.
- Leaders have created a safe and nurturing learning environment, which pupils and parents agree is safe and welcoming.
- Pupils are courteous and well behaved. They have very positive attitudes to their work.
- School leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Pupils also have a good understanding of fundamental British values.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They managed recent issues around the headship decisively and effectively.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - embedding the changes in the leadership structure and staffing that have recently been put in place
 - ensuring that subject leaders evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' attainment and progress.
- Make sure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, make faster progress across almost all year groups and subjects by:
 - providing work for the most able pupils that stretches and challenges them
 - improving pupils' achievement in mathematics through opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills
 - developing pupils' writing skills through continued opportunities to apply recently introduced teaching and learning approaches
 - consistently applying the schools' revised marking and feedback policy so that pupils are clear about how to improve their work.
- Improve the progress of children in the early years by:
 - embedding the recent changes to assessment processes so that teachers have a more accurate picture of pupils' knowledge and skills
 - making sure that children have opportunities to use their reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of the leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Recently published assessment information shows a sharp decline in a number of aspects of pupils' achievement. After a period of considerable turbulence in the leadership of the school, the recently appointed acting headteacher has begun to reverse this decline.
- The acting headteacher has created a new and committed senior leadership team that is comprised of staff who have appropriate skills and substantial experience at the school. Since September 2016, they have identified aspects that they need to improve and have begun to put actions in place to make sure that pupils are making better progress. While these actions are beginning to have a positive effect, they have not yet had the desired impact because pupils' progress is not currently rapid enough.
- Senior leaders have a good understanding of the areas for development and the features of the school that are strong. Their self-evaluation is honest and mostly accurate, particularly in their assessment of the weaknesses in pupils' achievement and in teaching and learning. One of the steps they are taking to improve achievement is changing the school's curriculum so that the school now follows the most recent national curriculum. Leaders feel that pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 will now be better prepared for the assessments in English and mathematics at the end of the school year.
- Subject leaders have clear plans in place as they aim to make sure that there is high-quality teaching and learning across the curriculum. This is especially true for English, where suggested actions, based on monitoring of, for example, writing, are starting to show good progress in pupils' work.
- Other subject leaders monitor work and draw up action plans designed to secure good development within their subject. These plans lack precision, however, when it comes to evaluating the impact on pupils' achievement. This is because the measures of success leaders choose are predominantly checks on whether actions have been completed, rather than assessments of whether pupils are making good progress.
- The acting headteacher has revised the school's system for checking on the performance of teachers. As well as setting targets for teachers linked to pupils' achievement and the school improvement plan, he has given greater prominence to the teachers' standards in appraising teachers' work. There is also a planned programme of training for teachers based on needs identified during activities such as book scrutiny and lesson observations. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving.
- Staff are very positive about the school and fully back the leadership team in its work to secure improvements. They value the training and support they receive, especially those who are new to the school or are newly qualified teachers.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and is having a positive impact on pupils' development. Leaders make effective use of specialist teachers to provide high-quality art and French lessons, and they provide a range of activities beyond the formal curriculum. These include arts and sports clubs, along with 'Wistonia University', where the school organises activities over a number of afternoons in the summer term. These activities are designed to develop broader skills and include simple car maintenance, flower arranging and woodwork.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well and pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values. There are regular opportunities to raise money for charities, which are chosen by the elected school council. Pupils' cultural understanding and respect for other faiths is supported through their learning in religious education, personal, social and health education and the school's programme of assemblies.
- School leaders make effective use of the primary school physical education and sport premium. The school has used part of the funding to join a local sports partnership, which gives pupils access to a variety of sports competitions. There has been an increase in the number of pupils taking part in after-school sports, including less common examples, such as golf. Staff have benefited from skills coaching, which has increased their confidence in teaching physical education.
- Senior leaders have targeted the pupil premium grant on providing support to boost pupils' academic achievement, as well as some pastoral support for those who need it. Recent assessments show that there are still considerable differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally in a number of areas. School leaders have now focused the funding less on reading and more on writing and mathematics to ensure that they more effectively build on the improving progress.
- Leaders use the funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities effectively. A new system to track progress has been introduced and staff are still becoming familiar with this. As a result, they are currently unclear about how to analyse pupils' current rates of progress. Nevertheless, staff have a good knowledge of pupils and their barriers to learning, and evidence in pupils' books shows that they make good progress from their starting points.
- Parents are, in the vast majority of cases, very positive about the work of the school. In conversations with inspectors, they said that their children are making good progress and they appreciate the variety of extra-curricular activities that the school provides, ranging from sports, such as athletics, to cookery. Their children feel safe and want to come to school. They feel that school leaders provide a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.
- The school does not currently have an external school improvement adviser. The previous adviser had been commissioned by the previous headteacher and has not returned since the appointment of the acting headteacher.

Governance

- Governors have a clear view of the school and a realistic understanding of its strengths and areas for development.

- They took swift and decisive action to secure continuous senior leadership following the departure of the previous headteacher in April 2016. This leadership team is beginning to deliver improvement until such time as a permanent team is appointed.
- Governors have a useful breadth of skills that includes the law, finance and education. They receive effective training, including in safeguarding. They challenge senior leaders well and ask robust questions around, for example, pupils' achievement and aspects of finance. They have, however, a less clear picture of how effectively pupil premium funding has been spent.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding throughout the school. This can be seen in the secure knowledge that staff have about how to keep children safe and about the risks of harm posed by, for instance, female genital mutilation and child sexual exploitation. Parents and pupils recognise that school is a safe place.
- Safeguarding records are thorough. The small number of reports and referrals are followed up promptly.
- The school maintains an accurate record of the checks that are carried out on all staff and volunteers at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The new leadership team has made a good start to improving teaching. In some subjects and some year groups, there is already evidence of effective teaching taking place. This remains variable, however, across year groups and across a range of subjects.
- While there are some occasions when teachers provide work that is challenging, in a majority of classes this challenge is missing, especially for the most able, including those who are disadvantaged. In mathematics in key stage 1, for example, pupils routinely miss opportunities to apply their knowledge of calculation to solving problems and answering questions that require reasoning skills.
- Teachers show effective questioning skills at times, which probe pupils' thinking and encourage them to explain their responses. This is, however, inconsistent, with teachers often asking closed questions that do not enable them to deepen pupils' learning.
- Leaders have introduced a revised marking and feedback policy, but teachers are not applying it consistently. As a result, most pupils are unclear about how to improve their work or what the next steps in their learning are.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and mostly plan lessons well so that pupils show enjoyment and interest. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and there are hardly any examples of lost lesson time through lack of attention or disruption. Pupils show positive attitudes to their work and these attitudes are contributing to pupils' improving rate of progress.

- Where teaching is at its strongest, teachers enable pupils to produce work to a high standard. Year 6 pupils have created high-quality pieces of pottery in art sessions, for instance, and their English books demonstrate knowledge and skills that are appropriate for their age. In Year 1, pupils show good progress, because they can write sentences linked by the word 'and', as well as being able to identify verbs.
- Teachers make effective use of their teaching assistants, especially to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils make good progress as a result.
- Pupils are given opportunities to apply their English and mathematics skills across the curriculum. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 use their writing skills well to write reviews as part of their membership of the film club. There are fewer examples of pupils using their mathematics skills, but they do appear in science books, where, for instance, they use reasoning to sort and classify materials.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident, respectful and unerringly polite. They are mature and show that they can take responsibility. Older children show this in particular through the care they show to younger children in their roles as 'buddies'. A small group of Year 6 pupils even offered to guide the lead inspector to the room he needed when he had clearly lost his bearings.
- Pupils feel safe in school. They are aware of the various forms of bullying that exist, such as racist or homophobic, but they say that there are no incidents in school. They know whom to report issues to if they arise.
- Pupils have a good understanding of fundamental British values. The school promotes these well and is successfully developing well-rounded pupils who are good citizens.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well at playtime and lunchtime, showing consideration for each other. When they return to class after their break, they do so in an orderly way, which means that very little learning time is lost.
- Classrooms are calm and there is no discernible disruptive behaviour. Pupils' good behaviour is contributing well to their improving progress. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and manage it effectively.
- Attendance is above average for all groups bar one. The attendance for pupils who are entitled to free school meals is slightly below average, but leaders are aware of the small number of pupils concerned and are taking action to improve it, such as setting up a rewards scheme in assemblies for excellent attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- The most recently published assessment information shows that there were several figures that were significantly below national averages in 2016, especially in writing and mathematics. Since September of this year, school leaders have taken action to address this situation, which is beginning to have a positive effect. The majority of pupils currently in the school, however, are not yet making fast enough progress across a range of subjects, especially writing and mathematics.
- School leaders are not yet making effective use of pupil premium funding. Published assessment data for 2016 indicates that disadvantaged pupils' achievement in a number of areas was significantly below that of others nationally. After analysing this data, leaders have made changes to where they target the funding for the current school year. For example, they have moved money away from reading interventions, where there is less need, to more writing and mathematics interventions. Disadvantaged pupils are starting to make stronger progress, but this is still inconsistent across year groups and subjects. Progress in mathematics, for example, is currently not as rapid as progress in English.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are not yet making strong enough progress. This is because teachers do not consistently provide them with work that is challenging and designed to stretch them, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress from their starting points. Leaders have identified needs well and provide good support, including the effective deployment of teaching assistants. Evidence from books shows that staff plan carefully for this group of pupils and focus well on making sure that they acquire knowledge, skills and understanding appropriate to their abilities.
- There were some positive elements in the published assessment information for 2016. Reading progress for all pupils in key stage 2 was broadly in line with national averages. The attainment scores for all pupils in reading and in mathematics were above the expected scores. Disadvantaged pupils scored above expected in mathematics and only fractionally below in reading.
- In key stage 1, the proportions of all pupils who achieved the expected standard and greater depth in reading and in mathematics were in line with national averages. In Year 1, the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above the national figure.
- Pupils currently in the school read well according to their age and development. Most-able pupils show a good level of fluency and understanding and they choose demanding texts, which they tackle well. Lower-ability pupils and younger pupils use their knowledge of phonics well to read unfamiliar words. Evidence from reading records shows that pupils read widely and often.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The progress of the current group of children is not fast enough. The work in children's books does not reflect the range of abilities and most-able children in particular do not receive challenging enough work. Teachers do not use assessments effectively, particularly in mathematics, where all children begin their work in number at the same place, regardless of their existing knowledge and skills.
- The proportions of children achieving a good level of development have risen over time and in 2015 and 2016 were slightly above national averages. However, given that approximately seven out of 10 children start their time in Reception with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age, this represents progress that is only slightly better than typical. Nevertheless, three quarters of children were ready for Year 1 by the end of their time in the early years in 2016.
- The learning environment, both indoors and outdoors, is bright and inviting and there are opportunities for children to develop their language skills effectively through various writing activities. There are also examples of relevant words displayed in the form of signs, such as in the hospital area or the railway station.
- There are very few opportunities, however, for pupils to use numbers for a purpose, especially to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. As a result, this aspect of their mathematical development is less well supported. In order to improve the quality of teaching in mathematics, leaders have commissioned a programme of training for early years staff and anticipate that this will contribute to improved teaching and learning.
- The early years leader has been in post since September this year. She has begun to make changes with a view to improving teaching, learning and assessment, so that children make faster progress. She has, for example, sharpened the assessments that teachers carry out as children enter Reception. She has also established a new online tracking system to check pupils' progress and, through this system, is involving parents more in sharing information about their children's achievement. Although she has achieved much in a short space of time, it is still too early to see the full impact of these improvements.
- Adults plan and deliver a mixture of lessons that are child-initiated activities and sessions that are guided by adults. They often focus well on developing children's skills in reading and writing. During these sessions, children concentrate, persevere and think for themselves. Adult-led activities are effective in engaging the children and stimulating their interest and curiosity. Children are keen to join in.
- As there are very few disadvantaged pupils in the early years, it is difficult to analyse how effectively leaders are using the pupil premium funding for this group. Senior leaders, however, recognise that they need to use the money more effectively across the whole school, including the early years, and have revised their plans to reflect this.
- Children are learning in a safe and nurturing environment. Staff constantly model respect, tolerance and friendliness, and children clearly learn from this. They are sensible, kind, welcoming and keen to please. Their behaviour is good and their attitudes to their learning are positive.

- Rigorous systems are in place to keep children safe. The early years leader is also the designated safeguarding lead and understands all the requirements and procedures. All staff are fully up to date with all necessary training and induction processes. There are no breaches of welfare requirements.

School details

Unique reference number	141568
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10025640

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Richard Barratt
Acting Headteacher	James Bancroft
Telephone number	01270 663 619
Website	www.wcla.co.uk
Email address	admin@wistaston.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about performance data, charging and remissions, and governors' information.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about performance data, charging and remissions, and governors' information on its website.
- The school converted to an academy in January 2015. The trust's name is the Cornovian Alliance.
- The school is larger than most primary schools.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below the national average. The percentage of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who receive support in school for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported through pupil premium funding is well below the national average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There is currently an acting headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher in place, following the departure of the substantive headteacher in the summer term of 2016.
- An independent company offers before- and after-school care and also provision for pre-school children in a separate building on the school site. These provisions are inspected separately by Ofsted and reports are available on the Ofsted website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out observations of learning in all year groups. Three of these were joint observations by the acting deputy headteacher and the lead inspector. The acting deputy headteacher and the acting headteacher were also present at meetings of the inspection team.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including the school’s self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of checks on teaching and learning, minutes of meetings of the governing body, behaviour logs and records connected with the safeguarding of children.
- Inspectors had discussions with various stakeholders, including members of staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and analysed pupils’ writing and mathematics, as well as their work in other subjects. They also looked at the work of children in the early years.
- The lead inspector also evaluated 90 responses that were available on Ofsted’s online questionnaire, ‘Parent View’.
- The school offers before-and after-school care for pupils from the school. This provision was included in the inspection.

Inspection team

Mark Quinn, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Maureen Hints	Ofsted Inspector
Jeremy Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Gary Bevin	Ofsted Inspector
Ann Dimeck	Ofsted Inspector

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