

Inspection of a good school: Whitchurch Community Primary School

School Road, Whitchurch, Tavistock, Devon PL19 9SR

Inspection dates:

12–13 February 2020

Outcome

Whitchurch Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school and attend well. They are polite and courteous. Behaviour is a strength of the school and bullying is rare. Pupils feel safe in school. Pupils I spoke with told me they feel confident to tell an adult if they needed to let them know of a problem, concern or worry.

Pupils focus well in lessons and are eager to learn. However, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and they find it more challenging to learn new concepts and ideas. Teachers sometimes set pupils activities that are too tricky. Pupils struggle and are reluctant to let teachers know. Teachers do not routinely check how pupils are getting on. As a result, pupils fall under the teacher's radar and gaps continue to grow. In recent years, pupils have made poor progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Pupils benefit from the vast outside space and a well-equipped school library. Pupils are enthusiastic about reading and they told me 'when we read, we learn more'.

Staff want the best for pupils. Leaders developed the Ark, a calm and nurturing environment, to support some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and pupils' social and emotional development.

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

Leaders are tackling pupils' poor progress with newfound urgency. This work is still in its infancy. Governors have an increasingly accurate evaluation of the school, based on their regular checks. Like school leaders, there is urgency to their actions and expectations have risen but this work is still relatively new.

Leaders have prioritised pupils' early reading. For most pupils, this is paying off. Pupils have positive attitudes towards reading. They recall stories they know with enthusiasm.

The approach to teaching pupils to read is consistent across the school. Pupils read books that contain the sounds they know with increasing fluency. Some find it hard to read whole words because they do not regularly practise this. Leaders identify pupils who are struggling and provide extra support. However, the additional support is not helping pupils to catch up quickly enough because staff lack expertise.

Leaders' plans to improve standards in science and foundation subjects such as geography are at different stages. In science, ambitious curriculum plans are in place. Teachers sequence these plans well. They break lessons into manageable chunks, which build on pupils' prior learning. Teachers give pupils opportunities to conduct investigations. This helps pupils apply what they have learned. Pupils enjoy science. In subjects such as geography, leaders have provided teachers with ambitious curriculum plans. However, teachers lack the subject knowledge they need to bring plans to life. Sequences of lessons lack coherence. Pupils do not always learn what they are meant to. This causes gaps in their knowledge.

Pupils with SEND receive strong support for their social and emotional needs. Staff also provide precise academic support for pupils who are working well below their peers. However, support for pupils with SEND who are marginally behind is weaker. The curriculum for these pupils is too challenging.

Pupils enjoy real-life experiences, which bring meaning to their learning. They contribute to the Big Schools' Birdwatch, providing a charity with valuable information about the bird population around the school's grounds. Pupils also enjoy extending their learning around the school's pond. Visits, such as the Year 5 trip to London, help pupils to develop and apply their geographical knowledge.

Leaders recently introduced a different approach to teaching mathematics. Teachers are following this approach in their classes, but this is in its early stages. They are not sure what pupils already know and they are not keeping a watchful eye on how well pupils are getting on. This prevents them from adjusting their plans to match pupils' immediate needs. Some pupils find learning too easy or difficult, including pupils with SEND.

Children are happy in the Reception class. They now get off to an earlier start to learning phonics than previous cohorts. Most children are keeping up well. Adults provide children with suitable reading books, containing sounds they know. This helps them apply and practise their phonics knowledge. However, children do not have regular opportunities to apply their phonics knowledge in their writing. Children learn about numbers, but some find this tricky. It is not always clear what staff want children to know, which causes confusion.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that they only appoint adults suitable to work with children. Staff benefit from regular training to help them spot potential concerns about pupils' welfare. Staff know what leaders expect of them. They pass these concerns on to leaders, who decide

the most appropriate action. Leaders record the action they have taken and make clear if they have involved external agencies. Organised record-keeping helps leaders make well-informed decisions. Leaders and governors have an accurate evaluation of the school's safeguarding culture and act on recommendations from the annual audit without delay.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Across the curriculum, teachers do not check on how well pupils are getting on. This makes it difficult to spot pupils who need more help or challenge. As a result, pupils have gaps in their learning. Teachers need to use effective assessment strategies to check pupils' understanding and inform teaching.
- The school's approach to teaching mathematics is still taking root. Teachers are not meeting the different needs of pupils in their class, including in the Reception class. As a result, pupils find work too difficult or easy. Teachers need to adapt curriculum plans to meet the needs of all pupils, including pupils with SEND, so they build on what they already know.
- The quality of phonics support for the bottom 20% of pupils is not helping them to catch up quickly enough. Staff do not have the expertise they need. Interventions are not precise enough and do not help pupils to read whole words, and pupils have few opportunities to apply what they know in their writing. Leaders need to make sure staff have the training they need to help pupils catch up with the school's phonic programme.
- In foundation subjects, such as geography, pupils do not always learn what they should. Teachers find it hard to break curriculum objectives into a well-sequenced series of lessons that build toward clear milestones. Leaders need to ensure that teachers bring curriculum plans to life with sufficient coherence and scope, so that pupils know more and remember more.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2011.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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	113267
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10111607
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Anning
Headteacher	Angela O'Shea-Warman
Website	www.whitchurch-primary.devon.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 January 2016

Information about this school

- Whitchurch Community Primary School is a one-form entry, maintained school in Tavistock, Devon.
- Ofsted last inspected the school, under section 8 arrangements, in January 2016 and judged it to remain good.
- There have been several recent additions to the governing body, including the appointment of a national leader of governance.
- The school has been receiving support from the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector conducted deep dives in these subjects: reading, science, geography and mathematics. He met with senior leaders and curriculum leaders, conducted lesson visits, considered pupils' workbooks, and spoke with pupils and teachers. The inspector carried out most activity alongside curriculum or senior leaders.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and the assistant special educational needs coordinator. Together, they looked at individual pupils' plans

and discussed the provision in place for pupils with SEND. The inspector considered the school's provision for pupils with SEND during deep dives.

- The inspector spoke with representatives from the local governing body as well as considering minutes from past governing body meetings. He also had a telephone discussion with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector met with the designated leader for safeguarding. Together, they considered how well leaders maintain pupils' safety. He also reviewed the school's single central record. The inspector also spoke with staff, pupils and members of the governing body about safeguarding.
- The inspector analysed the school's attendance information, behaviour logs and records of exclusion.
- The inspector considered responses to the online survey, Parent View.

Inspection team

Nathan Kemp, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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