

Inspection of Frodsham Weaver Vale Primary School

Ship Street, Frodsham, Cheshire WA6 7PZ

Inspection dates: 15–16 July 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not benefit from a well-managed and well-led school. Almost one fifth of pupils do not attend school regularly. Leaders do not deal effectively with those pupils who engage in aggressive behaviour and bullying. Leaders' expectations of the standard of pupils' behaviour are low. Some pupils feel unsafe and intimidated at school.

Many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not get a high-quality education. However, pupils who attend the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) flourish. Their teachers understand and meet their needs well. In the rest of the school, this is not the case. Teachers' understanding of the needs of many pupils with SEND is poor. Some pupils with SEND become uninterested in their learning and this often leads to them disrupting others.

Leaders and governors have narrowed the curriculum for pupils in favour of English and mathematics. This is at the expense of other subjects in the curriculum. All pupils' knowledge of other subjects is not good enough. Pupils do not achieve well. In contrast, children in early years enjoy a broader curriculum offer. Even so, they are not as well prepared for Year 1 as they might be because their learning is not planned with enough care.

All pupils benefit from the experiences that leaders provide to enhance their wider development. Pupils make improvements to their school and local community. They learn about the careers that are available to them. They learn about how to protect the natural environment.

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

Leaders and governors have not uncovered the root causes of the considerable and wide-ranging problems at Frodsham Weaver Vale Primary School. Leaders and governors do not have an appropriate curriculum in place for pupils. Consequently, teachers cannot deliver a well-planned and effective curriculum. Despite having an effective specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder, leaders do not know why the curriculum is not working for pupils with SEND in the main school.

While parents and carers generally feel that pupils behave well, inspectors found that behaviour across the school is poor. Low-level disruption routinely interrupts pupils' learning. It is not 'nipped in the bud'. As it escalates, it upsets other pupils and causes them to worry. Leaders have allowed some pupils' behaviour to escalate into frequent incidents of aggression. Considerable numbers of pupils told inspectors that they do not feel safe in school due to poor behaviour, fighting or bullying. Rates of exclusion are far too high. The decisions to exclude some of the pupils with SEND are not based on a sound understanding of these pupils' additional needs.

Leaders do not find out the reasons why pupils misbehave in some lessons and not in others. Leaders do not question why pupils are not learning well during lessons. They have not made the link between a poor-quality curriculum and poor behaviour. This is because leaders have done too little to develop an appropriate curriculum. In addition, they do not have an appropriate oversight of what is happening in classrooms.

In reading, writing and mathematics, teachers are clear about what leaders expect most pupils to learn in each year group. However, there is an over-emphasis on these subjects at the expense of others. Added to this, the learning of pupils with SEND in the main school is limited in reading, writing and mathematics.

Leadership of subject areas other than English or mathematics is in the very early stages of development. Leaders only began to develop plans for the rest of the curriculum just before the pandemic began. Teachers are unclear about what exactly pupils need to remember in some subjects. At times, pupils remember the activity rather than the key knowledge that their teachers wanted them to know. This negatively affects how well pupils achieve in different subjects. Leaders provide additional support and numerous catch-up sessions for pupils who have fallen behind.

Children in early years gain a broad understanding of most areas of learning. However, a lack of oversight in how well the curriculum is delivered across the Nursery and Reception classes means that children do not build up their knowledge as well as they should.

Governors do not pay enough attention to the development and delivery of the curriculum, including in early years. They do not have an accurate understanding of how well pupils are learning across the curriculum. Governors do not hold leaders to account about how well pupils learn, including for those pupils with SEND.

Despite the many weaknesses evident in the school, leaders ensure that most pupils read fluently and accurately. Teachers and support staff are well trained in teaching pupils to read and to enjoy literature. Reading plans are well thought out for most pupils. This begins in the Nursery class. Children learn to listen out for the important sounds that they need to be able to recognise. This sets them up well for when they begin their more formal learning about phonics in Reception Year and in key stage 1. Most pupils quickly build up their reading knowledge as they progress through the school. Leaders ensure that the reading books that they provide support most pupils to build up confidence in reading. Most pupils develop a love of reading as they practise the sounds that they know.

Leaders have thought carefully about how to support pupils' personal development. They have ensured that all pupils, including the most vulnerable and those with SEND, take part in regular, high-quality extra-curricular activities. These activities help pupils to build up their resilience and character. All the pupils who spoke with inspectors described different activities that they felt had helped their wider development.

Staff feel well supported by governors and leaders. Leaders ensure that staff well-being and workload are considered carefully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders and governors do not ensure that pupils feel safe in school. Staff are trained in managing the procedures for safeguarding, such as supporting pupils with significant identified safeguarding needs. However, leaders are complacent about the potential dangers in relation to pupils' behaviour and safety that can quickly escalate. Although pupils feel that staff listen to their worries, many pupils feel that issues such as bullying are not addressed fully. Inspectors also found that leaders do not act quickly and effectively to address bullying.

The attendance of too many pupils is poor. Leaders demonstrate a lack of tenacity in ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are in school on a regular basis. This means that leaders cannot assure themselves that pupils are kept safe when they are absent for considerable amounts of time.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and teachers do not meet the needs of pupils with SEND in the main school. Those pupils with SEND whose needs are not met become disengaged with their learning and their behaviour deteriorates. They do not learn as well as they should. Leaders, with urgency, need to ensure that teachers make sure that pupils with SEND learn well.
- Governors have not held leaders to account for the high number of behavioural incidents across the school. They have not challenged the appropriateness of the use of exclusion for some pupils, especially those with SEND. Leaders have not considered the root causes of high numbers of reported incidents of aggressive behaviour, fighting or bullying. They have not noticed that some staff are not managing behaviour well. As a result, pupils' learning is disrupted. A considerable number of pupils do not feel safe in school. Leaders must make sure that there is a strong culture of safeguarding and that they, and staff, ensure that pupils behave well. Governors and leaders must ensure that all pupils feel safe in school.
- Governors have not held leaders to account for the very low attendance of some of the most vulnerable pupils in the school. Leaders have not taken enough action to ensure that these pupils are in school on a regular basis. Vulnerable pupils are not protected from potential harm that they might encounter while they are absent from school. As they are not in school regularly, they do not learn as well as they should. Leaders and governors need to take drastic action to improve how well the most vulnerable pupils attend school. They need to check more carefully any pupils whose attendance is declining and show greater tenacity in improving this before it becomes a problem.

- Leaders and governors have not taken enough action to develop the curriculum beyond reading, writing and mathematics. The plans for other areas of the curriculum do not set out clearly what pupils need to learn. As a result, the quality of education for pupils is poor. Leadership of subjects other than reading, writing or mathematics has only recently begun. Leaders and governors do not have an up-to-date picture of how well the wider curriculum is being delivered, including in early years. Leaders must ensure that all children and pupils benefit from a well-organised curriculum that enables them to achieve well across a range of subjects. Governors need to hold leaders to account for how well pupils build up their knowledge across all curriculum areas and key stages.

The school may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	111115
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10197118
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Colin Whelan
Headteacher	Peter Van Geffen
Website	www.weavervale.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 September 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. This resourced provision caters for seven primary-aged pupils and was full at the time of the inspection. All pupils in this base have an education, health and care plan.
- There are also high numbers of pupils with SEND in the main part of the school.
- A new chair of governors, a new special educational needs coordinator and a new lead for pastoral care and inclusion have been appointed since the time of the last inspection.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons

responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other leaders in the school, including the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a consultant currently working with the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school's central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, geography, science, and art and design. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school.
- Inspectors looked at the 22 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the eight free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. They also considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 50 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Cole Andrew	Ofsted Inspector
Pippa Jackson Maitland	Her Majesty's Inspector

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