

Inspection of a good school: Weston Primary School

Lamsickle Lane, Weston Village, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4RA

Inspection dates:

12 and 13 October 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are happy, safe and enjoy each other's company. They work hard and behave well during lessons and at breaktimes. They love playing and learning together in the school's beautiful outdoor areas. Pupils enjoy the extra responsibilities that they are given, such as play buddies and being members of the school council.

Relationships are strong and pupils are confident that staff will take good care of them. Pupils told the inspector that bullying is something that rarely happens. They said that if it did happen, staff would support them in resolving matters.

Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, staff provided a wide range of clubs to help pupils to develop their talents and interests. These are gradually being reintroduced along with music lessons and inter-school sporting competitions. Educational trips have started again. Pupils in Year 6 are looking forward to a residential visit later in the school year.

Leaders have high expectations for what pupils can achieve in English and mathematics. However, leaders are not as ambitious in some other curriculum areas. Plans regarding what pupils need to learn lack detail and do not help pupils to build their knowledge on what they already know.

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

Pupils develop into enthusiastic learners at Weston. They concentrate well in lessons and do not give up when work is challenging. This process begins in the Reception class where children are quick to learn the school's routines and happily settle into school life. Children begin each day by signing in on their personalised attendance card before taking part in the daily music-and-movement session. They learn to cooperate with one another and benefit from a well-planned curriculum that helps them to progress through all areas of learning.

Staff read regularly with pupils and encourage them to develop a love of reading. Children in the Reception class have access to a wide selection of books. However, many of those at an early stage of reading, including pupils in key stage 1, do not learn to read as quickly as they could. The books that they are given to read do not match their knowledge of phonics. As a result, they are not able to practise the sounds that they have been taught. This delays the development of greater fluency in their reading.

As pupils develop their reading knowledge, staff make regular checks to identify those in danger of falling behind. They provide effective support to help these pupils to keep up. Many of the older pupils who met with the inspector were keen readers. They experience a broad reading curriculum that includes a wide range of different authors and genres.

The curriculum plans for some subjects other than English and mathematics are ineffective. They do not focus clearly enough on the knowledge that pupils need to develop or the order in which they need to learn subject content. The plans often contain tenuous links between subjects. This leads to confusion and has a negative impact on learning. For example, pupils who met with the inspector could remember very little of what they had learned in geography. Some did not know the difference between geography and history. The lack of ambition within the wider curriculum means that pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of their education at the end of Year 6 as they should be.

Leaders are quick to identify pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The leaders for SEND work closely with parents and carers, and outside agencies where necessary, to ensure that pupils with SEND receive the right support. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND can access the curriculum. However, weaknesses in the school's curriculum plans also affect the progress that these pupils make.

Pupils learn about equality and the importance of having respect for those who are different. They develop an understanding of different religions and cultures. This helps pupils to have a respectful view of each other and the world in which they live.

Since the school reopened to all pupils, following the COVID-19 closures, leaders have prioritised pupils' well-being and nurture. They have made sure that any pupil who is experiencing difficulties with mental health issues is well supported.

Governance is strengthening. Many governors are relatively new to their role. They are reflective and thoughtful about their work. They are keen to support the school's improvement.

Staff feel well supported and are appreciative of the steps that leaders take to consider staff workload.

Parents are highly supportive of the school. Almost all of those who responded to Ofsted Parent View, the online survey, would recommend the school to others.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that subjects in the wider curriculum, such as geography and history, may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All members of staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding pupils and know the procedures to follow if they have any concerns. Records relating to safeguarding are well maintained and stored securely. Leaders work with external agencies, when necessary, to provide support for pupils and their families. They also ensure that pupils learn how to stay safe when working online or playing out with their friends.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders' plans in some areas of the wider curriculum do not clearly identify the subject-specific knowledge that pupils need to acquire in each year group. This prevents pupils from building their knowledge on what they already know. Leaders should ensure that the school's curriculum plans set out precisely what pupils need to learn in all subjects. These plans also need to specify the order in which pupils' knowledge needs to be developed.
- Younger pupils are often given books that they struggle to read. As a result, they are not able to practise the sounds that they have learned. Teachers should ensure that children at the early stages of reading are given books that match their phonics knowledge.

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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2016.

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.

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	111114
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10204402
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Russell Houghton
Headteacher	Ros Atkins
Website	www.weston.halton.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	27 and 28 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Several members of staff have been appointed since the previous inspection, including two assistant headteachers.
- Since the previous inspection, there has been considerable change to the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- During this inspection, the inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the leadership team, including the leader for SEND.
- The inspector held meetings with teachers and subject leaders.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector also held a meeting with a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experience of school. He also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during breaktimes.
- The inspector examined records related to safeguarding. He also met with the designated safeguarding lead to discuss how pupils are kept safe.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, geography and science. As part of this process, he met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at examples of pupils' work. The inspector looked at curriculum plans in other subjects. The inspector also listened to pupils reading.
- The inspector considered the 62 responses to Ofsted Parent View. He also looked at the responses to the staff and pupil survey.

Inspection team

Paul Tomkow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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