

# Inspection of Alumwell Infant School

Primley Avenue, Walsall, West Midlands WS2 9UP

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Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

The school's motto of 'we learn, we grow, we achieve' sums up the school's vision well. All pupils and their families are cared for deeply by everyone involved in the school. Pupils with any physical or mental health needs receive high levels of support. This has created a caring and nurturing environment that permeates throughout the whole school.

Pupils are happy and confident. They enjoy school and talk positively about kindness and being friendly. The school celebrates the diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds the pupils come from.

Pupils of all ages behave well. Adults have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and pupils respond positively to these. Incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. Leaders deal with any issues consistently when they occur.

All pupils experience a rich and varied curriculum. However, children in Reception get off to a slow start, especially with reading and mathematics. This slows the progress they can make.

Staff promote pupils' love of reading well, for example through the welcoming new library, displays and activities, including a monthly magazine sent to each pupil's home. However, there is not enough urgency given to improving pupils' reading skills. Some pupils do not get enough practice to improve their reading fluency.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious for all. It follows the early years foundation stage framework and the national curriculum. Plans set out the knowledge pupils should learn in all year groups and are well sequenced. As a result, learning is planned to revisit and build on what pupils already know. For example, in religious education (RE), Year 1 pupils find out about Sikh places of worship and holy books. In Year 2, they then learn about the Five Ks of Sikhism.

The implementation of the planned curriculum is not consistent across the school. For example, physical education (PE) is not taught well enough. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and practise relevant skills. In some subjects, such as history and science, leaders have had limited opportunities to check and evaluate how well their subject is taught.

Staff have a focus on developing pupils' language and subject vocabulary. Teachers model language well and expect pupils to use and remember it. This is helping to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. The focus on vocabulary also helps pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Staff support EAL pupils to get the most out of the curriculum. They make progress in line with peers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the full curriculum. This may be through bespoke provision for a small number of pupils or carefully adapted activities. There are strong systems in place to identify and respond to pupils' needs. Leaders and staff are well trained in relevant therapies and interventions. These have a positive impact on pupils' progress and/or mental health.

Teachers assess pupils' work regularly. At the end of each topic, teachers use the information to adapt future planning.

Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have regular opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical learning. Most make strong progress in mathematics. However, the time pupils spend on activities is sometimes not well matched to their needs. For example, some pupils may spend too long on work they can already do easily. As a result, learning time is not used as effectively as it could be.

Leaders have not given the teaching of reading the emphasis that it needs. This is despite being aware that many pupils are behind where they should be. For example, children in Reception do not start learning phonics until too late in the term, and pupils rarely have opportunities to read individually to adults in school. As a result, many pupils do not read as well as they could.

Pupils enjoy a range of trips and activities to support their wider development. They learn how to stay safe and healthy in an age-appropriate way. Fundamental British values, such as democracy and developing mutual respect, are evident throughout the school. For example, pupils elected their class representatives on the school council.

Staff feel well supported and part of a collegiate team. They appreciate the steps leaders and governors take to support their well-being.

Governors have a clear understanding of the main issues affecting the school. They are focused on supporting leaders and staff to help pupils catch up on lost learning. Governors generally hold leaders to account and fulfil their statutory roles well. They do not, however, always record actions and their impact following governor meetings.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Ensuring pupils are kept safe is a high priority for everyone. Staff have the skills to identify potential safeguarding issues. They are clear about how and when to report concerns to leaders. Leaders are tenacious in following up any concerns raised. They work closely with external agencies when necessary.

Leaders check that new staff are suitable to work with children before they start working in school.

Leaders adapt the curriculum to respond to local safeguarding issues. They provide relevant information for parents, for example, about online safety. Pupils are encouraged to talk to staff about any worries they may have.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders do not give enough priority to ensuring that the youngest children make a prompt start to learning. Children in Reception were not taught phonics or mathematics for almost the first half-term in school. As a result, children are behind where they should be and gaps in learning have widened. Leaders need to address this as a matter of urgency to ensure that children are given the opportunity to catch-up and get back on track.
- The teaching of early reading is not as effective as it should be. Staff are not following the school's chosen phonics scheme as closely as they could. This slows their progress. Leaders need to review the school's approach to the teaching of phonics to ensure that all pupils, especially those in Reception, the lowest 20% and those who are not heard to read at home, are helped to catch-up and get enough practice to improve their reading fluency.
- Subject leaders have not all had opportunities to review how well their subject is taught across the school. Plans to develop subjects further are not yet fully in place. In some subjects, there has been little professional development for staff in recent years. This means that not all subjects are taught as effectively as they could be. Senior leaders and governors need to support the development of middle leaders in order to maximise the effectiveness of this role.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104143
<b>Local authority</b>	Walsall
<b>Inspection number</b>	10200191
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	269
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Dee Scott
<b>Headteacher</b>	Donna Harper
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.alumwell-i.walsall.sch.uk">www.alumwell-i.walsall.sch.uk</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 October 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average-sized infant school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Inspectors spoke to the headteacher, deputy headteacher, leaders, members of staff and pupils. The lead inspector spoke to three governors, including the chair and vice-chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke to some parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science, history and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors met with the subject

leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors also looked at plans and samples of pupils' work from a range of other subjects, including art, RE and design and technology.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders, governors and staff about the systems and actions they take to ensure that pupils are kept safe. They looked at policies and school records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed the relationships between pupils and adults.
- Inspectors also met with leaders and staff to find out about how pupils with SEND are supported, behaviour, the wider curriculum, pastoral support and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and Ofsted's online survey for parents, Parent View, including comments received via the free-text facility.

### **Inspection team**

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

John Bates

Ofsted Inspector

Barry Yeadsley

Ofsted Inspector

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