

Inspection of The Nethersole CofE Academy

High Street, Polesworth, Tamworth B78 1DZ

Inspection dates: 30 November and 1 December 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy school but should be doing much better in their learning. Across the school, including in the early years, pupils do not learn a meaningful, challenging curriculum. Although pupils try hard in their lessons, the way the curriculum is taught does not help them know more and remember more over time. New leaders are working rapidly to address these issues. There are early signs of success.

Behaviour deteriorated after the last inspection. It has now changed a lot for the better. Pupils are polite, respectful and courteous. They hold doors open and offer chairs to visitors. Pupils are good at accepting others. They say that 'it would be boring if everyone was the same; everyone has a spark'.

Pupils are proud to represent their school at sporting events or when laying a wreath at the local cenotaph. Pupils are clear about their own Christian faith but they have a weaker understanding of other religions.

Pupils feel safe at school. Staff support them well when they are worried about something. Pupils say that, in the past, bullying was not always dealt with well; this is getting better now. Staff really care. They support the new leader's vision that pupils deserve better.

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

Areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have not been addressed effectively. Actions taken by the trust and local academy board to improve the school have been hindered by the COVID-19 pandemic. Recently, the trust asked an executive headteacher to oversee the school. New leaders have quickly put in place systems, policies and strategies to improve the school. The decline in the quality of education has been halted and there is some evidence that the school is improving.

The executive headteacher rapidly identified the weaknesses across the school and put in place a robust action plan to address the systemic failings. The focus on behaviour and teaching and learning is beginning to drive the improvements needed. Staff roles and responsibilities are now clear and understood by all.

The new behaviour policy is having a positive impact. Staff and pupils say that behaviour has been transformed. Year 6 pupils told inspectors that it is a lot better than before the leadership changed. The school is calm and orderly. Pupils try hard in lessons and focus on their learning. Staff apply the new behaviour policy consistently well. Everyone knows what is expected.

The curriculum is not coherently planned or sequenced from the early years to Year 6. It does not make clear what pupils will learn and when they should learn it. Staff do not always know the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn in lessons. In the early years it is not clear how the foundations for later learning are laid. Adults

are not sure what skills and knowledge they want pupils to learn and practise. This means that pupils do not make the progress that they should.

A comprehensive coaching programme for all staff is now in place. Leaders in the school, such as those for early reading and mathematics, are being empowered to lead and take action. They support teachers well to develop their classroom teaching skills. Regular training sessions focus on curriculum and pedagogy. This helps teachers to improve their classroom practice. However, these developments are still in their infancy.

Provision for many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is weak. There are missed opportunities to adapt resources and lessons to meet pupils' individual needs effectively. Pupils with SEND are well cared for and included, but do not make the progress they should.

Previously, pupils did not experience high-quality teaching of phonics. Too many different approaches were used, leaving many pupils with weak reading skills. Leaders have put in place a structured and consistent approach to the delivery of phonics sessions. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained in the new approach. Decodable reading books have been bought to help pupils practise their sounds. Pupils are now experiencing more success in phonics. They are keen to talk about books they read and their favourite authors. It is clear to see that reading is a key priority in the school.

Staff help pupils settle into school quickly. Relationships are warm and positive. Parents and carers have confidence in the early years, but many expressed a lack of clarity about the changes elsewhere in school.

Leaders are keen for pupils to develop confidence and independence. They encourage pupils to carry out their responsibilities well. Play leaders, for example, have been well trained and know how to help younger pupils play games at lunchtime.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Regular weekly briefings keep safeguarding at the forefront of everyone's minds. Leaders ensure staff are well trained and know what to do if they are worried about a pupil. Staff use the school's systems appropriately to refer any concerns to senior leaders. Timely action is taken to secure support from external agencies for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils are taught how to stay safe. They know the places where they are not safe when out of school. Pupils learn about stranger danger, including when online. They remember information about not sharing personal information.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has been through a turbulent time and parents are unclear about the leadership arrangements for the school. The trust should take action to clarify and formalise the leadership arrangements in the school. They should ensure the continued support for the executive headteacher in driving the improvement plans already in place.
- The development of the leadership team is in the early stages. Some leaders are only just beginning to lead improvements and monitor their subject area. Senior leaders should continue to support leaders across the school to develop the skills and expertise needed to ensure that the quality of education is high in all subject areas.
- The planning and sequencing of the curriculum across the whole school are weak. Consequently, pupils are not taught well and do not make strong progress in their learning. Leaders should ensure that there is an ambitious, well-sequenced curriculum in place from the early years through to Year 6.
- Staff do not always know the key learning points that pupils need to learn. This means that pupils do not build on their previous knowledge to achieve success in learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the key knowledge they want pupils to know and when to teach it.
- Not all teachers possess the essential subject knowledge to teach effectively. Key leaders within the trust have already started to develop the pedagogical skills of staff in the school. These leaders should continue to coach and model so that all staff have the skills, knowledge and confidence to teach all the subjects of the curriculum well.
- Pupils with SEND do not achieve well. Leaders should help and support staff to know how they can adapt learning appropriately to support all pupils effectively.
- The recent changes in leadership have impacted on parents' confidence in the school. Many parents say that they are not well informed about the changes in the school or what their children are learning. Leaders should ensure that they further improve the partnership with parents. They should keep parents informed about the improvements they are making to the school.

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	139127
Local authority	Warwickshire
Inspection number	10202548
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Smith
Headteacher	Sam Smith (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.thenethersoleceacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	12 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher left the school on 5 November 2021. An executive headteacher has been appointed by the trust to oversee the improvements at the school.
- The school received its last section 48 inspection of church schools on 17 March 2016. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021. The next inspection will be within eight years of the last section 48 inspection.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, members of staff and the school office manager. The lead inspector met with the chair of the local academy board. She also met with two representatives of the Birmingham Diocese Multi-Academy Trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Deep dives in reading, mathematics, science and geography were carried out. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work. The inspectors also met with pupils to discuss their learning in these subjects and listened to pupils read.
- A range of documentation was scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school, curriculum plans and the school website. Minutes of trust board meetings and local academy board meetings were also checked.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspectors considered the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff training and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke to parents on both days of the inspection. The lead inspector considered responses, including free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View, the online questionnaire.
- There were difficulties for staff in accessing the online staff survey so inspectors made arrangements to talk with staff individually or in small groups so that they could give their views on the school.

Inspection team

Nicola Harwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Deborah Allen	Ofsted Inspector
Stephanie Moran	Her Majesty's Inspector

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