

Inspection of a good school: Wimbotsham and Stow Academy

Chapel Lane, Wimbotsham, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE34 3QH

Inspection date: 19 July 2022

Outcome

Wimbotsham and Stow Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are positive about, and proud of, their school. They consider it to be a comfortable and safe place to study and play. From the start of early years, pupils gain confidence to go about their learning. They enjoy topics they study. Pupils notice the improvements leaders have made to the curriculum. Pupils welcome the greater level of challenge in the work teachers require them to do. They stick at it and many achieve well.

From early years through to Year 6, pupils learn and show what good behaviour is. They behave well. In lessons, pupils are often respectful and generous in their support of each other. Pupils of all ages mix happily together at social times.

Pupils feel and are safe. They say that adults put right the minimal instances of bullying that occur. Pupils learn to manage their emotions and friendships. They use circle time to resolve concerns and share their feelings.

Pupils' views are listened to. Led by their house captains, pupils play an important role in the school community. They help with the organisation of lunchtimes and the planning and running of events such as sports days and the school fayre.

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

The Unity Education Trust (the trust), governors and school leaders provide clear, effective leadership. They are sustaining a good quality of education. Leaders are also making changes they judge to be necessary. They have taken appropriate steps to make sure the curriculum is well designed in each subject. At first, COVID-19 slowed the pace of change. The impact of leaders' work is now evident in pupils' enjoyment and achievement in most subjects.

From the start of early years, adults foster pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Adults in early years encourage children to handle books and follow storylines through daily stories and 'book talk'. Adults teach phonics accurately. They make sure pupils read books that

include words and sounds they know. Most pupils use their phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words accurately. Skilled adults support pupils who are less secure readers. Many pupils become fluent readers by the end of key stage 1. Pupils in key stage 2 also like to read. They have plenty of opportunities to read and listen to stories. They can grab a book from their class library or choose a story to listen to in the regular 'book flick' sessions.

Leaders establish what pupils' capabilities and needs are, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders then help teachers support pupils with SEND to access the same curriculum as their classmates.

Leaders have laid out what pupils will learn in each subject. They pick content that reflects the school's curriculum 'drivers' (adventurous, belief, challenge, diversity, enrichment and heritage). Guided by leaders' suggested strategies, teachers deliver the curriculum well in most subjects. Teachers teach through activities that focus pupils' attention on important knowledge or methods. Teachers check pupils have grasped key information. Teachers then move pupils on to further studies. Many pupils' work is of a good quality. They remember and apply much of what they have studied. This is a strong feature in mathematics. In a couple of subjects, leaders have not set out the most effective teaching or assessment approaches. Where this is the case, some teaching over time is less effective. Pupils' progression through the curriculum in these subjects is uneven.

Leaders place considerable emphasis on developing pupils' understanding of themselves and of others. Beginning in the early years, pupils learn about emotions, healthy relationships, privacy and safety. They also learn how to make things better if they fall out with their friends. Pupils' respectful behaviour contributes to the happy atmosphere evident in school. Pupils also develop an appropriate knowledge of local heritage and the diverse nature of life in modern Britain.

Adults know pupils well and provide them with excellent pastoral care. Pupils say this helps them to talk about their worries and hopes.

Many parents offer positive endorsements of the quality of care and education their children receive. However, several parents comment less favourably about the quality and timing of communication about their children's education. Leaders have not finished developing the school's website so that it reflects the work taking place in the school.

Together, the trust and academy review committee (ARC) provide effective governance. The trust has provided governors with the framework and training to hold leaders accountable for their work. Governors are fulfilling this role increasingly well. Leaders are well placed to build on the improvements they are making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure staff have the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep pupils safe. Staff follow the school's process for reporting concerns about a pupil's well-being. Designated safeguarding leads make sure pupils receive the necessary support. Leaders seek the advice of appropriate external agencies where pupils need extra help.

Pupils are taught strategies to keep themselves safe. When concerns arise, pupils have confidence that staff are willing and able to help.

The trust commissions external audits to provide assurance that the school's safeguarding processes are robust.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not settled on the most effective teaching or assessment strategies in a small proportion of subjects. Where this is the case, some teaching over time is less effective and pupils' progression through the curriculum is less even. Leaders should review what is working well and what needs to be better in these subjects. They should then accelerate their work to develop teachers' confidence to teach and assess pupils' understanding in each subject. Leaders should support teachers to use assessment information to better inform the next stages of teaching.
- Some parents are less positive about the quality and timing of communication about their children's education. The school's website does not reflect aspects of the provision offered within the school. Leaders should review and make suitable amendments to the way they share information with parents so that they are better informed about their children's education.

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 predecessor school, Wimbotsham and Stow Community School, to be good on 20 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	145533
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10227572
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	125
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Allison Randall
Co-headteachers	Louise Arrowsmith and Suzannah Hayes
Website	https://www.wimbotshamandstowacademy.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wimbotsham and Stow Academy is a smaller-than-average size primary school.
- The school is part of The Bridges Federation. All three schools in the federation joined the Unity Education Trust in June 2021.
- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documents, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. An inspector also listened to several pupils read.
- An inspector spoke with the subject leader and looked at curriculum plans and some pupils' work in one other subject.

- Inspectors met with the co-headteachers and other leaders, including the head of school, the special educational needs coordinator and the parent support worker.
- Inspectors looked at school documentation and spoke with leaders, teachers, support staff, members of the ARC, pupils, parents and representatives from the trust to establish the effectiveness of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- The lead inspector met with three representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- The lead inspector met with four members of the ARC, including the chair.
- Inspectors spent time observing pupils at breaktimes and lunchtimes. An inspector spoke with the school's house captains and one other group of pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed in the 19 responses to Ofsted Parent View and in the discussions held with some parents at the start of the inspection.
- The school's analysis of its own surveys of parents', pupils' and staff's opinions were also considered.
- Inspectors considered the views in the 11 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Russell Ayling

Ofsted Inspector

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