

Inspection of Watling Street Primary School

Watling Street, Brownhills, Walsall, West Midlands WS8 7LW

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected 13 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to belong to the Watling Street community. There is a shared sense of pride and positivity throughout the school. School values such as respect, aspiration and resilience are at the heart of every decision made. Leaders have high expectations of all pupils and expect them to work hard, which they do. Pupils achieve well. They show positive attitudes towards their learning.

Staff expect pupils to behave well, and pupils respond well to these high expectations. The environment is calm, with staff and pupils having mutual respect for each other. Pupils value kindness. Opportunities, such as older pupils supporting younger pupils as 'special friends', help pupils to show kindness to one another. Bullying is rare. Staff sort out any incidents quickly. Pupils understand the need for rules, not just in school but also in the world around them.

Pupils enjoy the wider opportunities and experiences offered to them. Members of the junior leadership team recognise why their responsibility is so important. Pupils speak positively about visitors into school, such as musicians, who support their learning.

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

Leaders have reviewed the curriculum over the past two years. They have thought about and set out what they want pupils to learn and when they want them to learn it, starting in the early years. The new curriculum is ambitious for all.

Teachers break learning down into small steps to help pupils learn new knowledge successfully. They use resources effectively to support learning, such as maps to show how the Romans invaded Britain over time. However, in some subjects, teachers do not check what pupils have remembered precisely enough. When this happens, teachers do not identify and close the gaps in pupils' knowledge. This makes it harder for pupils to understand and retain their new learning.

Leaders prioritise reading. Pupils enjoy reading and explain confidently why they choose to read the books they do. Regular trips to the local library, along with carefully chosen books that are read to pupils, support a love of reading across the school. Leaders' recent review of the phonics curriculum led to refreshed staff training to ensure that all staff teach phonics well. Many staff have benefited from the recent training. However, some staff have still not developed the skills to teach phonics effectively. Support for pupils in the early stages of reading ensures that they have every opportunity to catch up. This helps them to become confident and fluent readers.

Most subject leaders are new to their roles. Senior leaders' support is starting to help them to understand what they need to do to check how well pupils are learning. They are also supporting subject leaders to identify what is working well in

their subject and what needs to improve. However, some subject leaders are at the early stages of developing their skills of evaluating their subject.

Leaders and staff understand and identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) quickly. Teachers use their knowledge of these pupils' needs to support them effectively. They break learning down into very small chunks to help pupils with SEND to build on their knowledge successfully. Well-planned support allows pupils with SEND to access the curriculum independently. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils behave well. From the very youngest children upwards, pupils show positive attitudes to learning. Staff deal with any unwanted behaviours quickly and effectively. This means that lessons proceed smoothly and are rarely disturbed by poor behaviour.

Leaders monitor pupils' behaviour very well. They use this information to get support for pupils who may need extra help. Leaders work closely with families and their children to help them understand the importance of attending school regularly. They provide families with a range of support when needed to encourage their children to come to school regularly.

Leaders provide many opportunities to support pupils' personal development. For example, pupils go on trips to local places of worship. Visitors, such as police community support officers, come into school and work with pupils. These opportunities help to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils respect differences in others. They know what makes a positive relationship and how to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy.

Governors understand the school well. The information they receive from leaders helps them to find out about the impact of leaders' work. Governors share leaders' vision, offering support and challenge. Staff enjoy working at Watling Street and feel supported in all aspects of their work, including support for their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff understand the importance of safeguarding through providing up-to-date training. As a result, staff are alert to signs that pupils may be at risk and know how to report any concerns. Leaders act upon concerns quickly and find additional support from external agencies when needed.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online. Leaders update parents with information about online safety through events such as coffee and computing mornings. Pupils feel safe at school and have a range of trusted adults they can share any worries with.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not have the skills to teach phonics well. This means that there is some variation in how well phonics is taught. Leaders should ensure that all staff develop the skills to teach phonics effectively.
- In some subjects, teachers do not check what pupils know and remember carefully enough. Therefore, gaps in pupils' knowledge are not identified and addressed. This means that it is harder for pupils to build on what they already know. Leaders should support teachers to use assessments accurately so that any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding can be identified and addressed quickly.
- Some subject leaders are unsure about what is working well and the actions that are needed to bring about further improvement in their subjects. This slows improvements to the quality of education in their subject. Leaders should provide subject leaders with support to develop their leadership skills further, to enable them to improve their subjects.

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.

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	104202
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10242275
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	232
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lucy Jayes
Headteacher	Donna Probert
Website	www.watling-st.walsall.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 January 2009

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Inspectors spoke with a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body, including the chair and vice chair. Meetings were also held with other senior leaders, curriculum leaders and the SEND coordinator. Inspectors also met with a range of other staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with

subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.

- A range of documentation was also scrutinised, including leaders' plans to improve the school and the school website. Minutes from governors' meetings were also reviewed.
- When inspecting safeguarding, inspectors considered the school's safeguarding policy and spoke with staff and pupils about safeguarding. The lead inspector spoke with leaders about how safeguarding concerns and incidents are reported.
- Inspectors took account of parents' comments and responses in Parent View. They also spoke with parents on the school playground. Comments in pupil and staff surveys were also considered.

Inspection team

Michelle Bishton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Nicola Price

Ofsted Inspector

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