

Inspection of Weston Point Community Primary School

Castner Avenue, Weston Point, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4EQ

Inspection dates: 15 and 16 November 2022

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected nine 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?

Although most pupils said that they feel safe and happy, they do not get a fair deal at this school. Pupils, and children in the early years, are not kept safe. Neither do they receive the quality of education that they deserve. This is particularly true for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Most pupils are polite and they enjoy strong friendships with their peers. They understand that leaders have high expectations of their behaviour. Pupils said that behaviour has improved recently. They are enthusiastic and keen to learn. Still, in many subjects, the curriculums have not been well thought out. Pupils do not achieve well because leaders' expectations of what they can do are not high enough.

Most pupils are welcoming and understand the importance of respect. However, a few pupils speak disrespectfully about people who they perceive to be different.

Pupils trust that if they shared concerns with staff, most would listen and do their best to help them. If bullying is reported, leaders deal with the issues seriously. That said, many pupils lack an awareness of how to recognise bullying. This means that they are less likely to report these types of problems.

Pupils do not benefit from a rich menu of experiences to complement their learning. They have few opportunities to develop their talents and interests. Some pupils take pride in the special responsibilities that they carry out. These include acting as school councillors and anti-bullying ambassadors.

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

Over several years, leaders have invited in a culture of complacency. Their expectations of what pupils, and children in the early years, can and should achieve have fallen. Leaders have been slow to act to improve provision in the early years, which was a recommendation made in the previous inspection report. Governors have taken their eye off the ball. Little has been done to stem the deterioration in the quality of education that pupils receive. They have been let down.

Since taking up their positions, the acting interim leadership team have started to take appropriate actions to tackle the considerable shortcomings at the school. That said, the current leadership arrangements are very fragile. The capacity to bring about urgent and much needed improvement to the school is poor.

Leaders' work to improve the curriculum has centred around pupils and children learning to read well. Most older pupils enjoy reading and talked enthusiastically about their favourite books.

The new programme for early reading is clear and coherent. Leaders have ensured that staff are well trained, so that they can deliver the reading curriculum consistently well. Children in the Reception class learn to match sounds to letters in daily lessons. Leaders keep regular checks on the progress that pupils make in developing their phonics knowledge. They arrange rapid additional support for those pupils who fall behind in reading. However, some of the books that pupils are given to practise reading at home do not match the sounds they know. In some cases, this affects pupils' confidence and delays their fluency in reading.

As well as improving the reading curriculum, leaders have ensured clarity in the mathematics curriculum. However, this is not replicated in any other subjects. The curriculum content for many other subjects has not been identified. Pupils do not receive their entitlement to the full national curriculum. Staff are unsure about what they should be teaching. As a result, they resort to designing haphazard activities that do not connect to pupils' previous knowledge. This means that pupils endure a jumbled curriculum that does not allow them to develop their understanding well over time. Consequently, in many subjects, pupils do not gain the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve well.

Children in the early years are not prepared well for Year 1. This is because leaders have not identified what children need to learn. Many of the activities that staff design for children have little worth. Children do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their spoken language and vocabulary.

Few subjects benefit from the clear oversight and direction of effective subject leaders. Many subject leaders lack the experience and understanding that they need to design subject curriculums well or to provide guidance and support for their colleagues.

Leaders have recently introduced procedures for identifying pupils' needs early. The expectations of what pupils with SEND can achieve, given the correct support, has increased. However, staff, including in those in the early years, do not have the knowledge or expertise to provide effective support to meet the specific needs of pupils. Consequently, pupils and children with SEND do not fare well.

Pupils in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) benefit from effective support to help them to regulate their behaviour. That said, the curriculum that they receive, as in the rest of the school, is not well considered. It does not meet their academic needs nor does it allow them to achieve all that they should.

Mostly, pupils and children behave well. They are well mannered and articulate. Long-standing failures in providing adequate support for pupils with SEND, alongside the lack of ambition in the curriculum, have impacted negatively on the attitudes of some older pupils. Low-level disruption is a common feature during lessons, when learning activities lack purpose and do not form part of a well-designed curriculum. In addition, leaders have been slow to take action when pupils' attendance falls

below an acceptable level. Many pupils do not attend school regularly. This further impedes these pupils' achievement.

Leaders have recently arranged a number of themed weeks and creative projects aimed at developing pupils' awareness of the wider world. For example, during a recent multi-faith week, pupils were interested to learn about some of the features of major religions. They spoke excitedly about their learning on protecting the environment, which had culminated in a rare trip. However, these approaches do not form part of a well-planned curriculum. As a result, pupils' understanding of life in modern Britain is underdeveloped.

Members of the governing body have failed to hold leaders to account sufficiently well over a long period. They have been too quick to accept the word of leaders and so lacked awareness of the extent of the problems. Moreover, they have not received sufficient information to check that the actions taken by current leaders to improve the school are having the required impact.

Many parents and carers expressed their dissatisfaction with the school. They are alarmed about the turbulence in leadership, the decline in standards and the high turnover of staff. Governors and leaders do not communicate effectively with parents to respond to the reasonable concerns that they raise.

Most staff, including teachers at the early stage of their careers, feel that their workload and well-being are considered by interim leaders. They value the training and support that they have received in recent months. A small number of staff raised concerns about the increased expectation of leaders, which they feel has placed more demands on their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have recently introduced a range of policies and practices in line with statutory guidance. For instance, they have strengthened recruitment processes to ensure that all staff are suitable to work at the school.

Leaders have ensured that staff have received some training to help them to recognise the signs that could indicate that a pupil may be at risk of, or is suffering from, harm. Despite this, not all staff have a sufficient awareness of their own responsibilities to safeguard pupils. Not all staff act in the best interest of pupils. The safeguarding issues that arise are not always handled rigorously enough by leaders and governors. This puts pupils at risk.

Leaders do not maintain a close oversight of vulnerable pupils, including the considerable number of pupils who do not attend school regularly. Failings in the maintenance of effective record-keeping over time has increased the likelihood of pupils falling through the gaps. Leaders provide limited support to vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils have opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe. This includes pupils learning about online safety and some of the features of healthy relationships, such as consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Safeguarding arrangements do not fully meet statutory requirements. Staff have not received the training that they need to fully understand their responsibilities to protect children and pupils from harm. This puts pupils at risk. Leaders and governors must ensure that they urgently engender a culture of safeguarding, where everyone fulfils their statutory duties and plays a full role in keeping pupils safe.
- Leaders do not ensure that pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum that is as ambitious as the national curriculum. They have not thought through what pupils should learn and when this will happen. This hinders teachers from designing learning that enables pupils to know and remember more over time. Leaders must ensure that there is a coherent and ambitious curriculum, from the early years to Year 6, that sets out the key subject knowledge that pupils should learn.
- Staff have not received the training that they need to ensure that they can support pupils with SEND to achieve well. As a result, many pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, struggle with their learning and/or behaviour. Leaders should ensure that staff receive suitable training, so that they understand their responsibilities to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- Leaders do not keep a close enough track of the attendance of pupils. They do not analyse the reasons for pupils' poor attendance. This prevents staff from taking appropriate actions to support an improvement in the attendance of some pupils. This also leaves these pupils potentially at greater risk. Leaders should ensure that they keep close checks on attendance, so that more pupils attend school as regularly as they should.
- Pupils do not benefit from a wide, rich set of experiences to gain an understanding of the diverse world in which they live. Some do not understand the importance of tolerance and respect of others. Leaders must ensure that the programme to promote pupils' personal development is designed carefully to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain.
- The curriculum in the early years has not been established. This means that staff are unclear about what children need to learn. This limits children's achievement. Leaders must ensure that staff in the early years are clear about the important knowledge and vocabulary that children need to know and remember in readiness for their future learning. In addition, leaders should ensure that staff in the early years are equipped to deliver the curriculum effectively.

- Governors do not have an accurate and well-informed view of the school's effectiveness. The interim senior leadership arrangements are temporary and there are too few subject leaders to develop the curriculum effectively. Leaders rely heavily on external support for improvement. Consequently, the capacity to improve the school is poor. Governors and leaders must take urgent action to strengthen the leadership capacity and improve the effectiveness of governance in order to tackle the deep-rooted weaknesses at the school.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	111002
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10248972
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Watson
Principal	Angela Sheppard
Website	www.westonpoint.halton.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 and 31 January 2013, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes to the leadership team. At the time of inspection, an interim leadership team was in place. This included an acting executive headteacher, an acting executive deputy headteacher and an acting special educational needs coordinator. There have also been several changes to the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair of governors.
- The acting executive headteacher is the substantive headteacher of another local school.
- Many other members of staff are currently employed in temporary roles.
- The school runs a specially resourced provision for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. At the time of inspection, all eight available places were filled.
- Leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the acting executive headteacher and other leaders. They also spoke with other members of staff.
- Inspectors spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke with two representatives of the local authority and a school improvement consultant.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes, and around the school. They spoke with different groups of pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed available documentation, checked attendance information and spoke to leaders, governors, staff and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult. Inspectors also considered aspects of a number of other subjects on the school's curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered their views which were shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments received from parents. Inspectors also reviewed the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation shared by school leaders, including the minutes taken at governors' meetings and leaders' self-evaluation documentation.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Moira Atkins

Ofsted Inspector

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