

Inspection of Knutsford Primary Academy

Balmoral Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7ER

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 January 2023

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	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils speak with pride about their school and appreciate the wide range of experiences they have access to. Pupils enjoy the chance to explore their wider interests outside of class. For older pupils, this includes the chance to learn new skills, such as pet care and knitting, through the 'Knutsford University'.

Pupils are taught to be considerate of each other and to have empathy and respect for their peers. They understand the expectations adults have for behaviour, both in class and at playtimes. Pupils trust adults to resolve any worries or problems that they have, including with bullying. Although bullying is rare, pupils are taught how to spot it. Pupils feel comfortable to write comments in their 'thought books' and know that their teacher will take time to read these and respond. As a result, pupils know they are looked after and feel safe.

There is a shared commitment in the school to include everyone, and pupils value this highly. Pupils understand that differences are reasons to celebrate. If pupils need individual emotional or well-being support, there are trained staff at hand to help them. Pupils know that being both mentally and physically healthy is important for their success.

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

Leaders have created an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. This sets high expectations for what pupils will learn over time, starting from the moment children start school in the nursery. Pupils study the full breadth of subject areas and learn content that goes beyond the core requirements. Consequently, pupils are interested and engaged in their lessons. Leaders have a steadfast commitment to developing staff expertise. This means teachers typically have secure knowledge of the curriculum subjects they teach. This is exemplified in mathematics, where staff use their strong knowledge to enhance pupils' achievement.

Learning starts from the moment children join the nursery. They apply important knowledge they learn through exploration and play. Staff in the early years have a secure understanding of the knowledge children need to learn. In some areas of provision, adults are highly skilled to get the best out of children. However, there is some minor variation in the expertise of staff in order to support children to make maximum progress. This is true especially during children's independent learning. This leads to occasions where adults do not extend children's learning as much as they might.

Teachers accurately identify needs of individual pupils. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers routinely check that pupils understand and remember what they have learned. Teachers use their good knowledge of the curriculum to address any gaps in what pupils know. This includes specialist intervention if required, such as extra time to practise reading with a skilled

adult. Pupils with SEND are supported with accurate and detailed plans. This means all staff know how to best meet their needs in the specific areas set out. This supports pupils with SEND to access the ambitious curriculum and achieve highly.

All staff support pupils to develop a love of reading. Phonics teaching helps pupils to achieve well. They have high-quality opportunities to apply their growing phonics knowledge. Pupils consistently access reading books and texts that help them learn to read. This helps them gain confidence and read fluently. Pupils enjoy reading books and this boosts their achievement across the whole curriculum.

Pupils, including the youngest children, demonstrate good learning attitudes and self-control. This typically leads to classrooms that are focused and calm environments. Any disruption caused by pupils is addressed effectively by staff.

Pupils take on responsibilities and make a genuine difference to school life. They understand the role of democracy. They carefully consider the use of a vote to elect a suitable candidate for house captain or school councillor. Through these roles, pupils develop an appreciation of important issues. This includes topics such as sustainability and care for the environment. All pupils are empowered to know they can make a difference to the world through their choices. Parents value the efforts made by staff. They describe Knutsford as a place where their children are invested in, beyond the core curriculum.

Leaders are focused on continuously improving the school for the benefit of pupils. They make accurate evaluations of the quality of the education they provide. This is informed by the expertise of trust leaders and considered use of external partners. The local advisory body is effective at holding leaders to account. It also monitors important developments to provision. Leaders care about the well-being of staff. They listen to staff and consider how changes to policies might affect workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established reliable safeguarding systems that are well understood by all staff. Leaders manage the safe recruitment of staff effectively. Staff have accessed relevant and regular training and have specialist knowledge of the signs that a pupil might be at risk of harm.

Leaders are tenacious. They respond swiftly to all concerns shared with them, including low-level concerns. They seek external, professional advice and support to keep pupils safe.

Pupils learn a wide range of important knowledge that helps keep them safe and healthy. This includes making safe choices online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some minor variation in the expertise of staff in the early years. This leads to some inconsistency in the quality of learning opportunities that children access independently and through their play. Leaders should ensure that all staff in the provision have secure understanding of how to maximise and extend children's learning using relevant and meaningful activities consistently well.

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	146123
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10254990
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	436
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabetta Camilleri
Executive Principal	Eileen Anderson
Website	www.knutsfordprimaryacademy.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened as an academy in November 2018 as part of the Aspire Academies Trust.
- The school has an on-site nursery class that is managed by the governing body.
- The school uses one registered off-site alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive principal, deputy principal and a range of leaders to explore provision across the school, including behaviour, SEND provision and early years.

- The lead inspector met with a representative of the board of trustees and four members of the local advisory body to discuss governance. A meeting was also held with the chief executive officer and the executive principal of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, physical education and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum documentation, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and, where relevant, looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector met with the designated safeguarding leaders, the school's business manager and other staff to discuss safeguarding.
- During the inspection, inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, curriculum plans, school development plans, and safeguarding and behaviour records.
- Inspectors also spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning in lessons to understand what it is like to be a pupil in their school. Inspectors also observed the behaviour of pupils across the school site and considered the 178 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the 83 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, including 81 free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the 24 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Kristian Hewitt, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Michele Geddes	Ofsted Inspector
Karen Stanton	Ofsted Inspector

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