

Inspection of Church Lawton School

Cherry Tree Avenue, Church Lawton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 3EL

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, and students in the sixth form, enjoy accessing the wide range of enrichment opportunities on offer at Church Lawton School. They benefit from activities such as swimming and cooking. Pupils enjoy taking part in art and games clubs. These opportunities help pupils to broaden their experiences and improve their independence. Many pupils confidently shared their achievements with inspectors. Pupils are clearly happy at this school.

Pupils respond well to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour. Leaders ensure that the school is calm and orderly. Pupils strive to gain student or class of the week in assemblies. They value the time that they spend with Lottie, the therapy dog. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

Pupils know who to speak to if they have any worries or concerns. They trust staff to sort out any problems that they experience. Leaders deal with bullying effectively.

Leaders expect pupils to achieve well. Pupils, including those students in the sixth form, enjoy learning and they achieve well in most subjects. Caring staff ensure that pupils receive suitable support to meet their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The relationships fostered between staff, pupils, and parents and carers are typically positive. Most parents reported that their children appreciate the help and guidance that leaders provide.

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

Leaders have devised a curriculum that matches the ambition of the national curriculum. In most subjects, leaders have set out what they expect pupils to learn at the different stages in their education. In these subjects, most pupils build up knowledge that prepares them well for their next stage of education, employment or training. However, in a small number of subjects, this knowledge is not as clearly defined. Consequently, in these subjects, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders offer pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, a range of suitable qualifications. In addition, leaders successfully support pupils to access local colleges and other providers, when appropriate. This widens the range of academic and vocational courses available to pupils. Leaders endeavour to ensure that pupils' interests and talents lead to an appropriate accredited qualification.

In the main, teachers deliver the curriculum well. They check pupils' progress in lessons regularly. Teachers provide useful feedback that helps pupils to learn more knowledge. However, in a few curriculum areas, subject leadership is not as effective as it could be. This is because some leaders do not make sufficiently detailed checks to ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum consistently well. Occasionally, this

hinders leaders' ability to offer effective support to help teachers improve their delivery of the subjects.

Leaders prioritise reading, so that pupils become confident and fluent readers. Staff follow the phonics curriculum diligently. Children learn how to use phonics knowledge to read words in the early years. If any older pupils, including students in the sixth form, are still at the early stages of learning to read, staff help them to catch up quickly.

Leaders identify pupils' emerging and changing SEND well. Staff provide effective support for difficulties typically associated with autistic spectrum disorder. Leaders provide teachers with useful guidance about how to meet pupils' needs. When required, leaders provide more specialist support. For example, pupils receive support from the in-house therapeutic team.

Pupils do their best to behave well. Staff provide effective support that helps most pupils to regulate their behaviour in lessons and around the school. Most pupils improve their ability to recognise and manage their own behaviour, even if they find this difficult.

A small number of pupils do not attend school often enough. That said, leaders offer these pupils effective support. Leaders' use of part-time timetables is appropriate. Parents and staff work together to develop supportive strategies to improve pupils' attendance. Over time, most pupils attend more regularly.

Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They learn about different religions and cultures. Leaders have established a carefully designed personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum. As a result, pupils learn how to travel confidently, manage their finances carefully, and make and maintain healthy relationships.

Pupils receive a comprehensive careers education programme. They benefit from a range of work experience opportunities, including at sports clubs, local businesses and by working with animals. This helps them to develop their personal, social and academic skills in the workplace.

Trust leaders have recently improved the arrangements for governance. They have established a transformation management board that scrutinises a range of appropriate information about the quality of education that pupils receive. This has resulted in a sharper oversight of leaders' work. Those responsible for governance hold leaders fully to account for their work. Staff reported that leaders consider their workload carefully.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that all staff know how to keep pupils safe. Staff understand that due to their SEND, pupils may have additional vulnerabilities. Leaders ensure that robust procedures help to keep pupils safe. For example, staff ensure the safe management of traffic on the school's site.

Staff quickly pass on any concerns about pupils to those leaders responsible for safeguarding. Leaders work closely with other agencies, including the local authority, to make sure that vulnerable pupils get the timely support that they need. Leaders escalate their concerns if pupils do not receive the help that they require.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, leaders have not ensured that the knowledge that pupils must learn is identified in sufficient detail. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that they refine the curriculum to clearly identify the knowledge that pupils must learn.
- In a few curriculum areas, subject leaders do not make detailed enough checks to ensure that teachers implement the curriculum consistently well. This hinders how well leaders can support teachers to improve the delivery of the curriculum. Senior leaders should ensure that subject leaders are well trained to monitor the quality of the delivery of the curriculum. This is so that subject leaders can provide teachers with effective support and guidance.

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	141559
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10258936
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	5
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Fleur Bothwick
Principal	Paul Scales
Website	www.churchlawtonschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school became part of Liberty Academy Trust in December 2022. There have been significant changes to the governance arrangements of the school as a result. This includes the appointment of a new chief executive officer and executive team. As a result of this change, the school's name is now Church Lawton School.
- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have a diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder. Pupils also have other additional needs, such as hearing impairments or specific learning difficulties. They all have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

- Leaders make use of one registered alternative provider for pupils.
- Due to the very small number of children enrolled in the early years at the time of the inspection, no judgement for the early years has been made. However, inspectors considered the education and welfare of these children when judging other aspects of the school.

Information about this inspection

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

- The inspection was an unannounced inspection brought forward within the inspection cycle. This was because His Majesty's Chief Inspector wished to determine the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements, as Ofsted received concerns about the effectiveness of leadership and management, (including governance), at the school.
- Two of His Majesty's Inspectors made an additional visit to the school on 14 March 2023 to gather additional evidence.
- This was the first routine inspection that 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 conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics, humanities, art and design, science and PSHE education. They spoke with the subject leaders of these curriculum areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. An inspector listened to pupils reading. Inspectors also considered other curriculum documents.
- Inspectors spoke with the principal and other leaders in the school. They spoke with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body. Inspectors spoke with representatives of the trust, including trustees. They also spoke to representatives of the transformation management board.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation relating to safeguarding. This included: the school's central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. Inspectors scrutinised leaders' records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- An inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school. They considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text responses.
- There were no responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff or for pupils.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Pippa Jackson Maitland	His Majesty's Inspector
Elaine Parkinson	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Sproston, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Ahmed Marikar	His Majesty's Inspector

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