

Inspection of Lower Heath CofE Primary School

Lower Heath CofE Primary School, Lower Heath, Prees, Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2BT

Inspection dates: 19 to 20 September 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

The headteacher of this school is Helen Reynolds. This school is part of the Marches Multi Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sarah Finch, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Alex Fry.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a warm and welcoming school. Staff enjoy working here. They know their pupils and their families well. They use this knowledge to cultivate strong, nurturing relationships with pupils. Pupils value this. The school's core values of love, faith, respect, fellowship and thankfulness are at the heart of its work. For example, pupils develop strong bonds of fellowship in their mixed-aged classes. These shine through in pupils' interactions with their peers.

Leaders are ambitious for the pupils here and have paid close attention to the curriculum. They have recently rejuvenated their approach to reading. This work is having a positive impact. There is a rapidly growing culture of reading. Leaders have invested in new learning environments, including a thoughtfully designed forest school. They are making good use of these spaces to expand pupils' opportunities to learn. Pupils, and particularly those children in the early years, are benefiting from this work.

Pupils behave very well within lessons and around the school site. They understand the value of their time here. They all know who to go to should they have any concerns and are confident staff will resolve any issues they have.

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

The school has the highest expectations for pupils. The commitment to improving the school is clear to see. Staff share this vision and work as one to achieve it.

Recently, leaders have redeveloped the curriculum. They have thought carefully about the things pupils need to learn, and in what order, to be successful across all subjects. Consequently, the knowledge pupils encounter builds on the things they have already been taught. This helps pupils to make strong progress. While recent published outcomes for pupils in key stage 2 were low, the impact of the revised curriculum seen by inspectors shows a different picture.

To support the new curriculum, leaders have prioritised staff development. Increasingly, staff show a clear understanding of the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum. Because of this, the activities chosen by staff support pupils' learning. However, particularly in the foundation subjects, teachers do not always provide pupils with activities that are best suited to the intended learning. This is because teachers sometimes lack the subject knowledge needed to adapt the curriculum appropriately. Where this happens, this limits pupils' progress.

In the main, teachers check carefully that pupils have understood the things they have been taught. For example, in the early years, teachers use well-crafted opportunities to develop pupils' mathematical knowledge. They skilfully check on what children can do. Teachers then intervene quickly to adapt their teaching and close gaps in learning. This stops pupils from falling behind. However, in some subjects, the use of assessment is not precise enough. Where this happens,

teachers do not adjust their teaching to close the gaps in learning that have been identified. This holds pupils back.

The new phonics curriculum is well planned. Staff are experts and deliver this curriculum with precision. Consequently, pupils make strong progress and learn to read in a timely manner. When pupils fall behind, teachers spot this quickly and help them catch up with their peers. Leaders have carefully curated a range of books to compliment the school's curriculum. These texts support pupils' wider understanding of themselves and their place in the world. For example, pupils in key stage 1 read 'There's Room for Everyone', which allows pupils to begin to develop their sense of moral and social responsibility, by confronting difficult concepts such as immigration, in a carefully considered way.

The school's work to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is well established. Staff know these pupils very well. They quickly identify pupils who have additional needs. They work closely with families and a range of external agencies to ensure these needs are clearly understood. The school provides teachers with helpful information about pupils with SEND. Consequently, the work given to pupils with SEND is generally well matched to their needs. Pupils with SEND make sound progress.

The school's work to encourage pupils' personal development is promising. Diversity is celebrated here. Through the school's 'equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging' programme, pupils learn about the concept of otherness. Pupils are beginning to develop fundraising events to support those less fortunate than themselves. A growing number of pupils benefit from the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer. Leaders are taking appropriate steps to support more pupils to take up these opportunities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to adapt learning activities to meet the intended learning set out in the curriculum. This limits the progress pupils make. The school should continue its subject knowledge enhancement work to ensure that all teachers understand the subject and select appropriate learning activities linked to the curriculum goals.
- Occasionally, teachers do not use assessment precisely enough to identify and then address gaps in pupils' learning. This holds pupils back. The school should ensure that all teachers use assessment accurately to identify gaps in learning and adjust their teaching accordingly to ensure the gaps in pupils' knowledge are closed.

- Currently, the range of extra-curricular activities offered to support pupils' wider personal development is narrow and not well suited to pupils' interests. Consequently, pupils do not make the most of these opportunities. The school should continue its work to broaden the range of wider opportunities to ensure that more pupils benefit from the provision.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	146897
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10285056
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	94
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Alex Fry
Headteacher	Helen Reynolds
Website	http://www.lowerheath.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is one of 11 schools that comprise the Marches Multi Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The school received its last section 48 inspection of church schools in May 2014. Section 48 inspections were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They restarted in September 2021.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, who is also the designated safeguarding lead, and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the governing body, leaders from across the multi-academy trust and representatives from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, reading, geography and physical education. 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 looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance and behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Dukes

Ofsted Inspector

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