

Inspection of Excalibur Primary School

Ivy Lane, Alsager, Stoke-on-Trent, Cheshire ST7 2RQ

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

The headteacher of this school is Juliet Jones. This school is part of Chancery 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 (CEO), Louise Gohr, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Joanna Longman.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Excalibur Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, 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 graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are full of smiles as they arrive at Excalibur Primary School each morning. Kind and caring staff greet them warmly when they arrive.

Positive relationships between staff and pupils are evident throughout the school. Pupils are confident that staff will listen to them if they have any worries. Staff deal with any incidents of unkind words or behaviour promptly and effectively. This helps pupils to feel safe in school.

The school has high expectations for the achievement and behaviour of every pupil. Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. Children in the early years are exceptionally well prepared for the demands of key stage 1.

Many older pupils take on leadership roles such as diversity champions, peer counsellors and sports ambassadors. This helps pupils to recognise that they have a strong voice in the school. Pupils spoke about the importance of showing impeccable behaviour, and this is evident in their everyday conduct. They respond admirably to the high expectations of staff. Pupils' behaviour around the school is excellent.

Pupils understand the importance of knowing that 'everyone is different, and everyone is welcome'. They actively promote their understanding of the differences between people and the value of equality in all that they do.

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

The school has designed and created a well-ordered curriculum which begins in the early years. In the Reception class, the essential knowledge and skills that children require for future learning are well thought out. This means that children are extremely well prepared for Year 1 and beyond. For the most part, across key stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to build their knowledge in a logical order. Pupils, including those with SEND, acquire a rich body of subject knowledge in most subjects.

Typically, staff have strong subject knowledge. For the most part, they use this to design learning well and select appropriate activities for pupils. However, in a few subjects, where the curriculum requires further refinement, some staff lack the confidence and skills to deliver learning consistently well. This means that sometimes the activities that staff select do not support pupils to make secure enough connections between earlier learning and new concepts. Added to this, in these subjects, some staff do not afford pupils sufficient opportunities to revisit and consolidate essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary. This prevents some pupils from building secure foundations and learning as deeply as they can.

The school's assessment systems are well established. In the main, staff use assessment strategies effectively to skilfully check on what pupils know and

remember. They use the information from these checks to design and shape future learning.

The school identifies pupils' additional needs accurately and quickly. With support from the trust, the school ensures that staff receive appropriate training. This means that staff successfully adapt their delivery of the curriculum, with the needs of pupils in mind, so that pupils with SEND can learn well alongside their peers. When needed, pupils with SEND receive well-tailored, additional support.

The school has prioritised reading and implemented a rigorous approach to teaching pupils how to read. Staff begin teaching children letter sounds as soon as they join the Reception Year. Pupils quickly become fluent, confident readers. Children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 read books that are matched to the sounds that they know. Those pupils who need additional support receive help quickly from staff who specialise in early reading. Older pupils talked with enthusiasm about reading. Pupils are proud of the school library and the opportunity that this offers them.

Pupils show an eagerness to learn. Their excellent attitudes to their education mean that pupils' learning is not disrupted. This highly respectful behaviour means that classrooms, from the early years to Year 6, are purposeful and productive environments. The school is relentless in making sure that pupils attend school regularly and on time.

Parents and carers praised the school's approaches to communication. For example, many parents were positive about how well informed they are about what their children have been learning in the early years. This means that parents can better support their child's learning at home.

Pupils appreciate the range of opportunities that are on offer beyond the academic curriculum. For example, they are eager to go on residential visits and school trips. This allows them to gain an understanding of their local community and the wider world. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the activities available to them at playtime, where their interests and imagination are nurtured effectively.

Governors and trustees are clear about the school's priorities and they perform both their statutory and delegated duties well. They support and challenge both the work of the school and the trust. The school is highly supportive of staff's workload and well-being. Staff were extremely positive about working at Excalibur and they feel that leaders' actions make them feel valued. For example, leaders involve staff when reviewing policies and procedures.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, some staff are not sufficiently clear about the important knowledge that they should teach and when this content should be taught. This hinders staff in selecting appropriate learning activities and prevents some pupils from gaining the depth of knowledge that they should. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in this small number of subjects so that staff are informed well about how to design learning for pupils.
- From time to time, staff do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to revisit the essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary that is most useful for subsequent learning. On occasion, this prevents some pupils from having sufficiently secure foundations on which to build new knowledge. The school should support staff to deliver the curriculum consistently well so that pupils are fully prepared for future learning.

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	145035
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10242327
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	217
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Joanna Longman
CEO of the trust	Louise Gohr
Headteacher	Juliet Jones
Website	www.excalibur.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Chancery Academy Trust.
- A new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school run a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils

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 that 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 conducted deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered other curriculum areas. They met with leaders and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with the CEO, a group of governors, a group of trustees and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- 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.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Littler

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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