

Inspection of Acton Church of England Primary Academy

Chester Road, Acton, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 8LG

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Outstanding |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Early years provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected |

The school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 11 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 graded inspections under the section 5 Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the previous graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Chris Priddey. This school is part of North West Academies Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Stephen Docking OBE, and is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Brendan Wignall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school each day. The school is a haven of calm. Pupils learn free from distraction. They enjoy playtimes with their friends. Pupils are extremely well mannered. They are highly respectful to one another and to the adults that they meet.

The school has high expectations for its pupils. Pupils overwhelmingly rise to meet these aspirations. This includes those children in the Reception Year who cooperate with one another and care for each other very well. The behaviour of pupils in Acton Church of England Academy is exemplary.

Pupils take pride in their learning and, typically, they achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils soak up the fun every day. They are proud of their work, which is displayed prominently around the corridors and walls. Pupils strive to do well at school and they told inspectors that learning opens doors to an exciting future.

Pupils enjoy the array of sporting opportunities on offer to them. They take part in extra activities and tournaments, such as water-polo, boxing and badminton. These clubs promote a high level of physical activity among pupils. The school's clubs and activities inspire them to find a sport that is right for them. They help to foster a life-long love of fitness in many pupils.

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

The school, supported by the trust, has designed and created a well-ordered curriculum that flows from the early years. In the Reception class, the essential knowledge and skills that children require for future learning are well thought out. Children are well prepared for Year 1 and beyond. Across key stages 1 and 2, pupils continue to build their knowledge in a logical order. Pupils, including those with SEND, achieve well in most subjects.

Typically, staff have secure subject knowledge. However, in a few subjects where the curriculum content has recently been revised, teachers and leaders sometimes lack the confidence and skills to deliver new learning consistently well. This means that staff sometimes do not support pupils to make secure enough connections between new topics and concepts. This prevents a few pupils from deepening their learning, and from knowing and remembering more knowledge over time.

Leaders' assessment systems are well established. In most subjects, teachers skilfully check what pupils know and remember. However, in the subjects which have recently been revised, sometimes teachers do not revisit essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary often enough. As a result, occasionally, some pupils do not commit new knowledge into their long-term memories.

The school has prioritised reading. Children learn about letters and the sounds that they make as soon as they start school. Staff receive regular and appropriate training to deliver the reading programme effectively. They have the expertise that they need to deliver the phonics programme consistently well.

Pupils take home books that match the sounds that they know. This enables them to practise their reading knowledge and skills regularly. Staff check that pupils are on track with their reading knowledge. If pupils fall behind, they receive effective support to help them to catch up quickly.

Many older pupils read often. They develop a love of reading because they are exposed to a suitably wide range of different texts and genres. These books spark an interest and support pupils' learning in other areas of the wider curriculum. Pupils enjoy author visits, both in person and virtually. These help to inspire and to motivate pupils to become avid writers themselves.

Pupils' additional needs are identified accurately and quickly by the school. Staff receive appropriate training and benefit from the network of highly skilled professionals from across the trust. Teachers successfully adapt the delivery of the curriculum with the needs of the pupil in mind. These adaptations enable pupils with SEND to learn successfully alongside their peers. Where needed, pupils with SEND receive well-tailored, additional support. This means that they do not miss out on learning important ideas in a subject.

The school provides a vast array of leadership roles for pupils. It carefully helps pupils to develop an understanding of democracy and the rule of law. The school has recently developed some of these roles further by introducing a pupil parliament. Pupils are elected to these roles by their peers. Those who sit on the parliament are making a positive contribution to school life through their involvement in the redesign of the school playground and in the purchasing of a new bike shed. Year 6 pupils are also proud and enjoy being Reception buddies, supporting those younger children to settle into school life well.

Governors and trustees have a thorough understanding of the school and perform their statutory and delegated duties well. Staff are overwhelmingly positive about the benefits of being in the trust and how leaders support their well-being. They are thankful of the use of a trained counsellor who they can access, should they wish. Staff enjoy the collaborative working culture fostered by the trust and school leaders. They recognise the positive impact that this has on their workload.

Parent and carer workshops are also on offer from the trust and cover issues such as resilience in children. This enables parents to support their children at home with strategies which encourage and promote this important life skill.

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 few subjects, leaders and teachers do not have all the knowledge that they require to deliver the new curriculums as intended. On occasion, this hinders the depth to which some pupils learn new information. The school should ensure that leaders and staff have the ongoing training required to deliver the curriculum to the highest standard.
- From time to time, teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to revisit essential knowledge, skills and vocabulary. Sometimes, this prevents some pupils from having sufficiently secure foundations on which to build new learning. The school should support teachers to deliver the curriculum so that pupils are consistently well prepared for subsequent 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 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

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| Unique reference number | 143159 |
| Local authority | Cheshire East |
| Inspection number | 10294397 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 177 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Brendan Wignall |
| Chief Executive Officer | Stephen Docking OBE |
| Headteacher | Chris Priddey |
| Website | www.actonceacademy.org.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Acton Church of England Primary Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2021. When its predecessor school, Acton Church of England Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of the North West Academies Trust.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Chester. Its last section 48 inspection took place in January 2017. The next section 48 inspection will be scheduled to take place by the end of 2025.
- A new headteacher and chair of the governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any 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 since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any ongoing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed samples of work in these curriculum areas.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read with a trusted adult.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese. She also met with the chief executive officer, a member of the board of trustees and the chair of governors.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also examined the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alex Farrow

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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