

Inspection of The Weatheralls Primary School

Pratt Street, Soham, Cambridgeshire CB7 5BH

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
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The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is Ruchi Sabharwal. This school is part of Staploe Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Carin Taylor and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Simon Wright.

What is it like to attend this school?

Many pupils enjoy coming to school. They develop positive and warm relationships with staff. Pupils know staff are there to support and care for them. From the early years upwards, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and who to turn to if they have any worries. Younger children identify their 'palm pals'. Pupils understand what bullying is. They know this is rare. Should it occur, staff deal with it promptly and effectively. Pupils are happy and feel safe at school.

The school has high ambitions for pupils to succeed. However, turbulence in staffing has slowed these improvements. Over time, pupils have experienced inconsistencies in the quality of education. This means pupils have gaps in their knowledge and do not routinely reach the high expectations the school has of them.

Most pupils behave well. They understand the school's approach to managing their behaviour. Pupils show positive attitudes to their learning, which they enjoy. They understand the school rules of being ready, respectful, and safe. Pupils strive to embody the school values of pride, positivity, and perseverance.

Many parents and carers expressed satisfaction with how the school supports their child. However, a minority do not feel the school communicates with them well enough.

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

The school has recently reviewed and strengthened its curriculum. Clear and ambitious curriculum documents are now in place. These identify the important knowledge pupils will learn and in what order. This helps pupils to build their knowledge over time. The school has provided staff with training in how to teach the curriculum. Teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the planned curriculum well.

Until recently, systems to check pupils' knowledge and understanding of learning had not been precise enough. Gaps in pupils' knowledge or important misconceptions were not identified quickly enough. Consequently, pupils did not routinely have the support they needed to catch up. While this is now improving, some pupils still have gaps in their knowledge. This is especially evident in writing. Weaknesses in content and spelling, punctuation and grammar are not routinely addressed. This, combined with historic inconsistencies in the quality of education, has impacted negatively on how well pupils achieve.

The school prioritises reading. Children begin to learn to read as soon as they start in the early years. All staff are trained to teach phonics effectively. Regular checks swiftly identify anyone falling behind. Appropriate support is then put in to help them to catch up. Pupils have access to books that match the sounds they are

learning. This helps them to practise the sounds they know, so they become increasingly fluent. Older pupils build on this as they learn the more complex skills of reading. Pupils enjoy visiting the library to select books from their favourite authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have their needs identified promptly. Clearly written plans enable staff to adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. This helps pupils to access the same curriculum as their peers. Where required, pupils receive effective, tailored and individualised support. This helps them to make progress from their individual starting points.

The school ensures that pupils' well-being and personal development are a priority. Pupils learn to understand and appreciate differences. They show tolerance to those who are different from them. This starts in the early years when the youngest children learn about different families.

Pupils enjoy the various enrichment opportunities on offer. For example, older pupils take part in a science and engineering project. Such opportunities broaden pupils' experiences. There are plenty of chances for pupils to take on extra responsibilities. These include democratically elected school councillors and play leaders. Pupils fundraise and decide how to use these funds. This helps them to develop as responsible citizens. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests.

Recent leadership changes have ensured that the school has a clear focus on improving the quality of provision. This work is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils. For example, the rigour with which the school monitors attendance is reducing both absence and persistent absence. However, leaders know that there is further work to be done, so that pupils experience a consistently good quality of education.

Staff enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. They feel well supported. They appreciate that leaders are considerate of their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The way the school has previously checked how well pupils have understood the curriculum has lacked rigour and precision. This means the school has not routinely identified gaps in pupils' knowledge to put in place the right support to help pupils catch up. Consequently, gaps have remained, and pupils have not achieved as well as they should, particularly in English and mathematics. The

school should ensure that assessment identifies gaps in knowledge, so that pupils receive the support they need to close these gaps rapidly.

- A significant minority of parents who responded to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire do not feel the school communicates well with them. This means they do not have a clear enough understanding of how well their child is doing at school. The school should review their systems for communicating with parents. This is so parents have the information they need about their child's learning and wider development.
- The school's extra-curricular and enrichment offer is not as broad or varied as it might be. This means pupils do not routinely get the opportunities they might to develop their talents and interests. The school should ensure they implement their existing plans to broaden the wider offer available to pupils.

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	143941
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10288551
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	426
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Simon Wright
Headteacher	Ruchi Sabharwal
Website	www.weatheralls.cambs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 October 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since May 2023, having previously been the acting headteacher.
- There is an after-school club run by an external provider.
- The school uses three registered alternative providers.

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 this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English (including early reading), mathematics, art, and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, considered curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning, and scrutinised samples of pupils' work. Other aspects of the curriculum were also scrutinised to provide further evidence for the quality of education.
- An inspector listened to some pupils read to staff. They also spoke to pupils about reading.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour across the school. They met with groups of pupils to seek their views of the school. They also spoke to pupils informally in class, around the school and at breaktimes. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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 held meetings with senior leaders, the special educational needs coordinator, and the subject leader for personal, social and health education. The lead inspector met the chief executive officer of the trust and trustees.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, headteacher reports to governors, minutes of governing body meetings and school development plans.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents. They spoke with parents before and after school. Inspectors also considered 70 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 66 free-text comments. Additionally, an inspector met with an individual parent and the lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- Inspectors spoke with different groups of staff to gather their views, including about their workload and well-being. Additionally, they considered 39 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Suzanne Thrower	Ofsted Inspector
Adam Cooke	His Majesty's Inspector

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