

Inspection of Whitwell Primary School

Southfield Lane, Whitwell, Worksop, Nottinghamshire S80 4NR

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very proud of their school. The school sets high expectations. Pupils behave exceedingly well and with maturity. They are welcoming, polite and responsible. Pupils are happy and safe. They have very positive attitudes and enjoy learning. Pupils live out the school's BEST motto, 'Believe, Endeavour, Succeed Together'.

The school provides exceptional opportunities and experiences to develop pupils' personal development. Pupils make the most of a wide range of sporting, artistic, musical and academic clubs that develop their interests and talents. They have opportunities to form lasting memories of caring staff and strong friendships. Staff are extremely proud of pupils' many achievements. They nurture pupils' confidence, resilience and independence. Pupils support each other. They value the range of leadership roles available, such as being sports and playground leaders, and mini police. Pupils put into practice the kindness and respect that they are taught. They lead on charity fundraising events. The school is very much part of the local community.

Parents and carers express very positive views about the school. One parent, whose comment was typical of many, said: 'The staff form wonderful and positive relationships with pupils and parents. Whitwell is a wonderful school with a great community feel.'

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

Staff put pupils' best interests first. The school leads with a strong moral focus, underpinned by child-centred values. A calm and purposeful ethos permeates the school. Overwhelmingly, staff like working at the school. They recognise the school's inclusive nature, in which each pupil is cherished and valued. Leaders, including governors, know the school well. The school has improved much since the previous inspection.

Leaders have developed suitably ambitious curriculums in most subjects. For example, in mathematics, carefully considered steps in learning enable pupils to gain mathematical knowledge, fluency, application and reasoning skills. Pupils build their understanding of mathematical concepts logically and systematically.

The school ensures that subject curriculums enable pupils to acquire and develop subject-specific skills. For example, in history, pupils gain a deepening understanding of causes and consequences as they progress through the school. In science, pupils learn to hypothesise, investigate and think like scientists. However, the school has not fully identified the key knowledge that they want all pupils in mixed-age classes to learn, in all subjects.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. They understand how pupils learn best. This enables pupils to learn well. They ask searching questions to check pupils' learning.

Staff quickly address any errors or misunderstandings in pupils' learning. Pupils take pride in their work.

The school prioritises pupils' reading. Books are valued and treasured. Leaders ensure that Nursery children build vocabulary through speech and language activities. Children begin to learn phonics within days of starting Reception. Staff are highly effective in the teaching of phonics. Younger pupils build their phonics knowledge to become fluent in their reading. Older pupils deepen their comprehension skills over time. Pupils learn to read very well.

The school's provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is a real strength. Leaders identify, know and understand pupils' needs very well. Staff adapt their teaching to meet these pupils' needs. For example, they break down tasks and activities. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their peers. These pupils learn very well.

Children get off to a fantastic start in early years. They have excellent opportunities to play and learn. Staff build and embed small, yet significant, steps in learning. Every activity supports purposeful learning. Staff prioritise children's personal, social and emotional development. Whether making dough or splashing in puddles, children learn to be curious, resilient and sociable. Adults engage meaningfully and purposefully with children. Routines are very well established. Many parents rightly express delight and confidence in their children's experiences in early years.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development is exceptional. Pupils gain a rich appreciation of life and responsibilities in modern Britain. They deepen their understanding of right and wrong. They recognise the importance of democracy. They value respect, difference and diversity. Pupils benefit from opportunities that enhance their spiritual development. For example, pupils experience awe and wonder when searching for micro-bugs and investigating micro-habitats in the Rookery.

The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education curriculum includes relationships education. Older pupils learn about sex education in age-appropriate ways. Pupils learn the value of money by saving and exchanging their well-earned 'Wellians', the school's reward currency. Pupils learn about healthy living. They appreciate different risks and how to keep themselves safe, including, for example, when in the community and when online.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not fully realised its intended ambition to build pupils' substantive knowledge in all foundation subjects for mixed-age classes. As a result, pupils do not build key subject knowledge as well as they should across the whole curriculum. Leaders must complete the work they have started to ensure that suitably ambitious curriculums support all pupils to build substantive knowledge in all foundation subjects.

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

Unique reference number	112649
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10288305
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	248
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tom Munro
Headteacher	Sarah Tomlinson
Website	www.whitwellprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	3 and 4 December 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up the substantive post in April 2023. The senior leadership team has been restructured since then.
- The school does not use the services of any alternative provision.

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 met with the headteacher and senior leaders. They met with governors, including the chair. They spoke with a local authority officer, remotely.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, geography, design technology and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited sample lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. They listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at a range of other subjects, including science, PSHE, computing, history, French and art. They visited lessons and reviewed curriculum planning and samples of pupils' work with leaders.
- Inspectors met formally with groups of pupils to talk about the quality of education and other aspects of school life. They spoke with staff and pupils informally.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and reviewed the provision for pupils with SEND.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff, pupils and parents; reviewed safeguarding records; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture of safeguarding that puts pupils' needs first.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation. They looked at the school's website and published information about the school's provision, policies, self-evaluation and development plan.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents who completed Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They reviewed the responses to Ofsted's survey of school staff.

Inspection team

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