

Inspection of Wethersfield CofE VC Primary School

Silver St, Wethersfield, Wethersfield Primary School, Braintree, Essex CM7 4BP

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

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	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this small rural school. They are happy and like learning. Pupils follow the school's values of respect, trust and love, which are threaded throughout each day. Pupils demonstrate these values in their kindness towards each other and friendly behaviour. This helps pupils feel safe.

The atmosphere in classrooms is purposeful and positive in lessons. There are clear routines for behaviour. These start in the early years and support pupils throughout the school to behave well.

The school has high expectations for pupils. Lessons are fun, and this motivates pupils to work hard and try their best. This includes pupils who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils listen intently and are eager to learn. They are happy to work on their own independently or with others.

Pupils understand difference and talk about it openly. They enjoy learning about other cultures outside of their village. Some have had the opportunity to have a pen-pal in Peru. This helps pupils to understand life in other countries. Pupils experience carefully planned trips to enrich their learning. These include the Saffron Hall and the Imperial War Museum at Duxford.

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

The school has introduced a curriculum that is broad and ambitious for all. This starts from the early years. The needs of mixed-age classes have been thoroughly considered in the development of this curriculum. Plans set out key learning in small steps over time. Curriculum guidance enables teachers to understand what pupils need to know as they move through the school.

In most subjects, teachers use curriculum plans well. They design lessons to introduce and consolidate learning. Teachers use a wide range of carefully selected activities. Pupils learn the subject-specific vocabulary that they need. This helps them to apply their new learning to written tasks. Teachers regularly check how pupils are doing. Their feedback helps pupils to understand clearly what they know and how to improve. As a result, pupils are resilient learners who strive to 'get it right'.

Some areas of the curriculum are being newly implemented. In these areas, teachers have not had all the training that they need. Consequently, teachers are not adapting their teaching as well as they could to ensure pupils are able to achieve as well in these subjects as they do elsewhere in the curriculum.

Older pupils act as role models for younger children. They help them to learn new skills and knowledge. Children in the early years quickly develop independence. They enjoy trying out their new skills. For example, after listening to a story about Mary Seacole, the children practised their first-aid skills on teddies.

The reading curriculum is a strength throughout the school. Pupils develop a love of reading from the early years. The school provides a wide range of high-quality books to support pupils to practise their developing skills. These include titles that leaders select based on pupils' interests. Phonics is taught daily by well-skilled adults. Pupils who fall behind get the help they need to catch up. As a result, pupils leave the school as confident, fluent readers.

Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum as their classmates. Sometimes, these pupils have extra adult support or tasks are adapted for them. This helps pupils with SEND to feel included. Staff accurately identify specific needs. This means that pupils receive effective support that helps them to achieve well. They make strong progress from their starting points. This sets them up to be ready for their next steps in learning.

Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to their learning. As a result, classrooms are calm and conducive to learning. Pupils focus in their lessons well. This starts in the early years, where children concentrate well in both independent play and adult-led activities.

The personal, social, health and economic curriculum helps pupils to understand about healthy relationships. Pupils also learn about healthy food and the importance of eating it. The school seeks out appropriate opportunities to enrich the experiences of pupils, for example, by arranging a residential trip for them. These experiences promote pupils' independence, resilience and well-being. Leaders carefully plan additional opportunities to both promote the personal development of pupils and to make links with their curriculum learning.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel supported and appreciated, especially regarding their well-being and workload. This has enabled the school to develop a stable workforce which is committed to ongoing improvement.

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 the newer curriculum areas, teachers are still developing their expertise to deliver the curriculum as well as leaders intend. This means teaching is not adapted as well as it could be. Where this is the case, a few pupils do not make the progress that they could. The school should ensure that teachers, including those new to the school, continue to have support and training so they are able to confidently adapt their teaching to deliver the curriculum to meet pupils' needs. This will ensure pupils achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.

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	115110
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10287089
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Penny Doe
Headteacher	Jinnie Nichols
Website	www.wethersfield.chorusschools.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, Wethersfield Primary School joined The Chorus Schools Federation in January 2023. There has been a change in governance with a new chair of governors, and significant changes in the school leadership team. The new headteacher joined the school in January 2023.
- Wethersfield Primary is a Church of England school. The last section 48 inspection took place in March 2023.

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) 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 had 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 a range of leaders, including senior leaders, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, and representatives of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector met with the local authority's school effectiveness adviser and a representative from the diocese.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. The lead inspector listened to a sample of pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' behaviour in and around the school, in lessons and at social times. They also spoke to pupils about behaviour. Inspectors also spoke to staff about behaviour and workload.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders about the wider pupil development, including the PSHE and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculums and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- 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 reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including the documentation for development and minutes of governing body meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaires. They also considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Suzanne Thrower, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Aimee Bray

Ofsted Inspector

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