

Inspection of a good school: Mereside Church of England Primary Academy

Mereside, Springfield, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY2 6LE

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The executive principal of this school is Laura Hopley. This school is part of St Chad's 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, Sarah Cockshott, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Anthony Orlik. There is also a head of school, Lindsay Hughes.

What is it like to attend this school?

Mereside is a caring and supportive school that puts the pupils first. Pupils say that teachers are kind and help them to learn. They say that love is a key value of the school. There are strong and trusting relationships between adults and pupils. Community, wisdom, hope, dignity, joy and peace are all celebrated. Pupils enjoy earning heart pin badges for being values champions. Many parents and carers are positive about the school and appreciate how staff care for and support their children.

New leaders who are supported well by the academy trust have made significant and positive changes to many aspects of the school. They have set high expectations for pupils. The school has strengthened its behaviour systems. Pupils have responded well to this. They behave well in class and around school. They enjoy the activities that are provided by sports coaches when on the playground.

Pupils enjoy learning in school. They talk keenly about their recent learning. However, in some subjects, they do not remember important knowledge that has been taught over time.

Pupils learn the importance of treating others fairly and with respect. As one pupil said, 'Everyone is different and we should celebrate this. It would be boring if we were all the same.'

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

The school has set out a curriculum that supports teachers to know what to teach and when to teach it. It has identified the important knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils need to know. As a result, teaching builds on what pupils have been taught previously. For example, in geography, children in Reception learn about the local area and where they live. Pupils in key stage 1 learn about the United Kingdom and its capital cities. Then, in key stage 2, they learn about a range of other countries, using maps and atlases to locate them. However, in some subjects the activities that are provided do not always help all pupils to learn and remember what has been delivered over time.

The school has put in place a new phonics curriculum. All staff have received training in this. Phonics lessons now make sure that pupils learn and practise the sounds that are being taught. This includes those pupils who the school has identified need extra support to read in year 2 and key stage 2. In addition, staff ensure that pupils get lots of opportunities to practise the sounds they are learning by providing pupils with books that are well matched to their stage of learning. However, despite these strengths, some staff lack expertise in delivering the school's phonics programme. This slows the learning of some pupils.

Pupils enjoy reading across the curriculum. The school has made sure that there is a range of texts for pupils to study and enjoy. Many pupils have favourite books and authors.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in all aspects of school life. Their needs are identified quickly, and support is put in place. The school liaises well with external agencies. Those with specific needs, including those with social and emotional needs, receive tailored and effective support, including in the 'learning lounge'. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make sure the work given enables pupils with SEND to learn as well as they could.

The school has organised a variety of visits and invited guests to engage pupils in the curriculum. Pupils enjoy visits, for instance, to a museum and an aquarium as part of the science curriculum. Furthermore, pupils are given responsibilities, such as being school councillors, sports leaders and reading ambassadors. They think these roles are important and take them seriously. The school council is determined that all areas of the school will be tidy. One pupil leader commented, 'We help to make our school a better place to be.'

Leaders have ensured that staff are listened to and they get the time they need to carry out their role. Staff appreciate this.

The local academy committee are supportive and keen for the school to do well. However, it has recently undergone several changes. It does not yet have a sufficiently detailed understanding of the school's performance and its curriculum to enable it to fully challenge and hold leaders to account.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Not all staff are experts in delivering the school's phonics programme. Consequently, there is some inconsistency in how well the early reading curriculum is delivered. This means that some pupils do not make as much progress as they could with their reading. The school should ensure that all staff receive the necessary support to teach phonics effectively.
- In some subjects the activities provided do not always help all pupils to learn and remember what has been delivered over time. As a result, some pupils do not remember as much as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff provide activities which support pupils to remember more across the curriculum.
- Teachers do not always adapt learning well for pupils with SEND in some subjects. Consequently, pupils with SEND do not make as much progress as they could in these subjects. The school should ensure that work for pupils with SEND is closely matched to fully meet pupils' needs to help them to learn more.
- Recently, there have been significant changes to the governance of the school. Some governors are new to their role or have been recently appointed. As a result, governors are still developing a secure understanding of the effectiveness of the school and its curriculum. Governors should continue to develop their role so that they hold leaders fully to account for the school's performance.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Mereside Church of England Primary School, to be good in June 2014.

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	147106
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10336449
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	371
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Anthony Orlik
Executive Principal	Laura Hopley
Website	www.mereside.shropshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.
- The school is part of St Chad's Academies Trust, which consists of 19 schools.
- The school is within the Diocese of Litchfield. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in September 2023. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place within five years of its last inspection.
- The inspector was aware during this inspection that a serious incident occurred at the setting since the previous inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the school in response to the incident was considered alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspector's judgements.

Information about this inspection

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspector held meetings with the executive principal and the head of school. He also met three members of the local academy committee, including the chair of the committee. He met two trustees, including the chair of the trust. The inspector also held meetings with the CEO and senior school improvement partners of the trust.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. He met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and viewed examples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke to pupils about science, history and art and design.
- The inspector observed children in the early years and pupils in key stages 1 and 2 read to a trusted adult.
- The inspector spoke with members of staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspector considered the responses, including the free-text comments, to Ofsted Parent View. He also considered the responses to the staff and pupil surveys. The inspector spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspector looked at a range of documentation that was provided by the school. This included the school's self-evaluation, school improvement priorities, school policies, curriculum documents, SEND records, behaviour records, attendance records and minutes of meetings held by the governing body and trust.

Inspection team

Barry Yardsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's 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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