

Inspection of Marfields Primary School

Waggs Road, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4BT

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Sandra Isherwood. This school is part of the Congleton Primary Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The headteacher also acts as the chief executive officer (CEO) of the trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Margaret Gartside.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy learning and feel happy in school. They value the warm, supportive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils told inspectors that staff 'really care' about how they feel. The pupils are very accepting of each other.

The school has high expectations for what children should achieve in the early years, including those in the provision for two-year-olds. This extends to subjects such as reading and mathematics, where pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. However, the school is working to finalise its expectations for what pupils should learn in some curriculum subjects. The school does not ensure that pupils gain a deep body of knowledge in these subjects.

Pupils behave well in lessons. The atmosphere in classrooms is calm and purposeful. Pupils strive to be the best that they can be. The school's rules, 'be safe, be ready and be respectful', ensure that everyone understands what is expected of them.

Pupils relish the variety of opportunities that are on offer to them during the school day. Pupils enjoyed the recent drama workshops that they took part in. They are proud of their leadership roles, especially those with the role of 'rookie lifeguard'. Learning about water safety is very important to the pupils because of the local open waters near to school.

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

The school has designed an ambitious curriculum that is interesting to the pupils. In some subjects, the school is at an early stage of identifying the specific knowledge that pupils need to know. Consequently, teachers do not have enough guidance on what they should teach and when they should teach it. In these subjects, some lessons do not build well on what has come before. This leads to pupils developing gaps in their knowledge, or only gaining a superficial understanding of what they are taught.

Staff deliver engaging lessons that pupils enjoy. However, in some subjects, the curriculum is not delivered as the school intends it to be. This means that, at times, the activities provided to pupils do not support them to learn as well as they could.

Strategies to check how well pupils learn the curriculum are underdeveloped. This means that the school is not sure what pupils know and remember. In turn, the school is not well placed to address some of the knowledge gaps and misconceptions that pupils have.

The early years curriculum is well designed. It supports children's learning and development in a structured way. Staff get to know the children as individuals. They use this knowledge of children to tailor activities that maximise their engagement. This helps children to get off to a positive start.

The school has taken steps to implement a suitable early reading curriculum. When children start in the early years, they quickly develop an interest in storytelling. Children begin to learn phonics as soon as they start in the Reception class. Staff teach the phonics curriculum with confidence and skill. They are alert to pupils who may not be keeping up with the phonics programme. Staff intervene quickly so that pupils receive effective and timely support. This helps them to gain confidence and to read with increasing fluency. Older pupils enjoy being able to listen to staff reading to them. The school helps to develop a love of reading in pupils.

Staff have the knowledge and skills to quickly identify pupils who may have SEND. The school ensures that pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), are supported to access the same curriculum as their classmates.

Children in the early years settle into school quickly. They form secure relationships with adults and with their friends. Older pupils build on this positive start. On the occasion that a pupil misbehaves, staff quickly and sensitively help pupils to get back on track. The school works with families to make sure that pupils attend school regularly.

The school ensures that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils learn to become responsible young people. They value diversity and celebrate the many differences that people have. Older pupils told inspectors that children who are new to the school are warmly welcomed and included.

Most staff enjoy working at the school, and they are passionate about ensuring that pupils have a variety of experiences. However, some staff do not feel that their workload is considered effectively. For example, they are not given the time to undertake certain aspects of their responsibilities.

Trustees and governors use their experience and knowledge to support and challenge the school. This includes to improve the quality of education that the school provides. However, they have not had sufficient oversight of some of their key statutory responsibilities.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the school has not clearly identified the most important knowledge that pupils should learn and when it should be taught. This means that, in these subjects, pupils have an uneven learning journey. The school should finalise its curriculum thinking in these subjects so that pupils develop a strong body of knowledge over time.

- Subject leaders have not been provided with sufficient opportunity to check that curriculums are being delivered as the school intends. This means that some pupils miss out on important parts of their learning. The school should ensure that staff are provided with appropriate support to check that these curriculums are delivered consistently across the school.
- The school's assessment strategies are underdeveloped. This means that pupils' misconceptions and gaps in knowledge are not consistently addressed. The school should ensure that staff are supported to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning.
- The trust and school have not ensured that all key information or training is up to date or accurately recorded, such as the intimate care plan, physical restraint records and up-to-date safeguarding references within documents. This means that some statutory duties have not been fully met. The trust and school should ensure that they are fully compliant with all legal requirements in line with appropriate guidance.

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	140895
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10268076
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Margaret Gartside
Headteacher	Sandra Isherwood
Website	www.marfieldsprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	4 and 5 May 2022, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Marfields Primary School converted to become an academy in June 2014.
- This school is part of the Congleton Primary Academy Trust.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school has a specially resourced provision. It is designated for up to seven pupils aged between four and 11 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. There are currently eight pupils who access this provision. All pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school provides early education for two-year-old children.

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.

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, including early reading, mathematics and history. They met with subject leaders and teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with the vice-chair of the trust board, who is also vice-chair of the local governing board. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- 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 met with parents at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Helen Friend, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Niamh Howlett

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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