

Inspection of Victoria Road Primary School

Victoria Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5RE

Inspection dates: 1 and 2 May 2024

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

The executive headteacher of this school is Kathy Nichol. This school is part of the Aspire Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Kevin Simpson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Sue Bowen. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other within the trust.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils happily come into school each morning. They are welcomed by caring staff on arrival. Relationships between staff and pupils are especially strong. This enables pupils to be ready to learn. Pupils are keen to come to school and said that everyone is welcome at their school.

Once inside their classrooms, pupils settle swiftly. They try hard with their work. The school's values of 'inspire, nurture, accomplish' are enacted in pupils' behaviour. Pupils listen carefully to their teachers. They participate in their learning with great enthusiasm. Pupils take into account the views of one another and they are keen to share their new learning.

The school has high aspirations for the academic success of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Overall, pupils in key stage 1 and 2 gain a secure body of knowledge across a range of subjects. However, in the early years, children do not build up their knowledge as well as they should. This means that some children are not well prepared for Year 1.

Beyond their lessons, pupils benefit from a range of activities. For instance, they enjoy attending clubs such as gardening, cooking and sports. Pupils are helped to develop as active citizens, both locally and globally. For example, pupils take part in litter picks to keep their local area neat and tidy and raise money for a school in Kenya.

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

This school has faced significant change and turmoil in recent years. In 2023, the proportion of Year 6 pupils meeting the expected standards in reading and mathematics was significantly below the national average. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and weaknesses in the previous curriculum, meant that pupils had too many gaps in their learning to achieve as well as they should. Working with the trust, the school has ensured that the curriculums have been strengthened. As a result, pupils currently at the school enjoy a good quality of education. They emerge as well-rounded young people who are ready for the next stage of their education.

The school provides an ambitious curriculum. In most subjects, the curriculum identifies the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers' secure subject knowledge supports them to choose activities that help pupils to know and remember more. In addition, teachers regularly check on how well pupils are learning. Teachers use the information from these checks well to reshape their teaching. For example, they provide additional opportunities for pupils to revisit prior learning when necessary.

In a small number of subjects, the school has not finalised its curriculum design. This means that the information that staff use to design a series of lessons is not as

clear as it could be. This prevents teachers from helping pupils to build their knowledge over time. It also hampers teachers from checking how well pupils are learning the most important knowledge in these subjects over time. In these subjects, teachers do not identify what pupils know. This means that teachers do not know if learning is secure before new concepts are taught.

In the early years, the newly revised curriculum is ambitious for children. However, due to some staff's underdeveloped knowledge of how children learn, the delivery of this curriculum is not as effective as leaders intend. Some children are not as well prepared for the move into key stage 1 by the end of the Reception Year as they should be.

The school gives high priority to the teaching of early reading. Pupils develop a love of reading. For example, children in the Reception class enjoy listening and joining in with familiar stories. Well-trained staff deliver the phonics programme effectively across the early years and key stage 1. Pupils who struggle with learning their sounds are quickly identified and supported well to catch up. The books that pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they know. Parents and carers are well supported so that they can help their children practise reading at home. Older pupils are fluent and accurate readers who can access the full curriculum successfully.

The additional needs of pupils with SEND are identified swiftly. Staff adapt their delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND learn alongside their classmates. Pupils with complex needs are given the individual help that they need to learn all that they should.

Pupils know and understand the school's rules. They know that they are expected to be 'kind, safe and ready'. At breaktimes, pupils enjoy playing in different zones in the playground. They run, climb and dig, taking advantage of the many activities on offer. Pupils, including those who arrive at the school from other countries, play harmoniously with their friends.

The school has carefully considered how it promotes pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and how to stay safe. Pupils develop their leadership skills through a range of roles. These include house captains, mental health ambassadors and pupil parliamentarians. This enables pupils to positively contribute to the smooth running of the school.

Trustees and members of the local governing body know the school well. They provide appropriate support and challenge. They are especially mindful of the impact of the pace of change on staff's well-being and workload. As a result, staff feel valued. They are proud to be part of the school community.

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 subjects, the school has not finalised the guidance and support that teachers need to deliver these curriculums as effectively as they could. This hinders teachers when designing learning for pupils. This prevents pupils from progressing as well as they should through these curriculums. The school should ensure that teachers have all the information that they need to deliver the subject curriculums well.
- In a small number of subjects, teachers' assessment strategies do not check that pupils are learning the most important knowledge over time. This means that teachers are not sure if pupils' learning is secure. The school should ensure that checks on pupils' learning identify and address gaps in pupils' understanding of key concepts.
- The school has not ensured that the staff in the early years have the expertise that they need to deliver the curriculum consistently well. As a result, children do not learn all that they should in readiness for their move into Year 1. The school should ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge about how children learn so that they are able to design learning activities that help children learn well.

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	143164
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10294398
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	135
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sue Bowen
CEO of the trust	Kevin Simpson
Headteacher	Kathy Nichol (executive headteacher) Suzanne Minor (head of school)
Website	www.victoriaroad.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	25 and 26 February 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Aspire Educational Trust. The executive headteacher and head of school have been in post since 2023.
- The school offers a breakfast club and after-school provision each day.
- The school does not make use 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.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the 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 carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, looked at a sample of pupils' work, spoke with teachers and talked with pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also considered the curriculum in other areas. This included talking with pupils and scrutinising curriculum documentation.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and other leaders. An inspector also met with members of the trust and the local academy committee, including the chairs of each group. An inspector also met with the CEO and the assistant CEO of the trust.
- An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they arrived at school and during lessons and breaktimes. They also spoke with pupils about their views of school life.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents. They looked at the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also spoke to a number of parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff who responded to Ofsted's staff survey.
- There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Littler

Ofsted Inspector

Rebecca Jewitt

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024