

Inspection of Whaley Thorns Primary School

Portland Road, Langwith, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG20 9HB

Inspection dates:	15 and 16 October 2024
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive principal of this school is Charlotte Butcher. This school is part of TEAM Education 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 Baker, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Ian Lowe.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school has high expectations for all pupils. However, these expectations are not fully realised. The quality of education that pupils receive is variable. Pupils do not always have secure knowledge of the subjects they study. As a result, they are not as well prepared for next steps as they should be.

Pupils know and respect the school's motto of 'everyone is different, everyone is special'. They understand the importance of treating people of all backgrounds equally. The school's 'kindness curriculum' helps pupils to reflect on values, such as humility, honesty and empathy. Most of the time, pupils demonstrate these values.

Many pupils talk about enjoying school. They feel safe. Pupils have confidence that members of staff would support them should they have a worry or concern. Most pupils behave well. Sometimes, pupils need reminders to focus on their learning.

Pupils develop their interests and talents by engaging with a range of clubs, such as construction, storytelling and football. The school organises educational visits to broaden pupils' horizons, including to the coast and to places of worship. Pupils develop their resilience by taking part in residential, including in Year 6, to London.

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

The curriculum is ambitious and sets out what pupils should learn and when, including opportunities for pupils to reflect on the most complex aspects of the subjects they study. The school has developed a model for teaching designed to help pupils build their knowledge. However, teachers do not use this model consistently to help pupils learn the school's curriculum. Despite this, pupils' achievements at the end of key stage 2 are improving.

There are variations in how well teachers deliver the curriculum. Teachers use modelling effectively to help pupils think. They often identify subject-specific vocabulary that pupils need to know. However, at times, teachers' explanations and their use of resources do not focus clearly enough on the important knowledge that pupils should learn. Some teachers do not routinely identify and resolve gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge. Pupils cannot always recall and connect their current and prior learning. As a result, pupils develop gaps in what they can remember.

The early years curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of individual children. Staff check children's understanding closely so that children develop their knowledge of the world around them. Children talk confidently about their ambitions, such as becoming a doctor. They are well prepared for key stage 1.

Reading is prioritised. The school is determined that pupils will become confident readers in order to become independent learners. Pupils in key stage 1, in particular, develop a love of reading. Some pupils need significant help with their reading. Focused support

ensures that they catch up with their peers. By the time pupils leave the school, they are accurate and fluent readers.

The school has clear systems in place to identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff use a range of personalised strategies to help these pupils develop their confidence and regulate their emotions. Pupils with SEND participate fully in the life of the school.

The school has worked hard to improve pupils' attendance. Most pupils attend well. They enjoy positive relationships with each other and with staff. Many pupils concentrate well and do their best. They take pride in their work. However, pupils occasionally lose focus and do not complete the tasks set.

Pupils have opportunities to develop their leadership skills. They enjoy being attendance ambassadors, reading ambassadors or members of the 'protected characteristics council'. Elected representatives of the school council organise charity events. Pupils learn about respectful relationships and develop their abilities to discuss important issues and help others.

Leaders identify areas for improvement accurately. With the support of the trust, their close oversight has helped to bring about positive changes. The trust ensures that staff, including those at the early stages of their careers, access high-quality training and develop their practice. A range of successful strategies support staff with their workload and well-being. Those responsible for governance help the school identify areas for improvement and bring about positive change.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not ensure that their explanations and the resources that they share with pupils always focus on the most important knowledge that pupils need to learn. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to complete tasks or understand how those tasks link to what they should learn. The school should ensure that teaching is consistently focused on the most important knowledge that pupils need to know.
- Teachers do not check pupils' understanding of new information routinely. This means that gaps and misconceptions in pupils' knowledge are not always identified and resolved. The school should ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding closely so that it is secure.
- Pupils sometimes lose their focus and do not complete learning tasks in full. This results in missed opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of some of the

subjects they study. The school should ensure that pupils demonstrate positive attitudes and are committed fully to their learning.

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	147626
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10347690
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	132
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Ian Lowe
CEO of the trust	Sarah Baker
Principal	Charlotte Butcher (Executive principal)
Website	www.whaleythornsschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision.
- The executive principal and vice-principal took up their posts in September 2022.
- Whaley Thorns Primary School converted to become an academy, joining TEAM Education Trust, on 1 June 2020. When its predecessor school, Whaley Thorns Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement for overall effectiveness.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive principal, other senior leaders, subject leaders, and the special educational needs coordinator. They also met with groups of staff, as well as the chair of trustees and the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in 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. Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with the leader responsible for the early years, visited the early years and spoke with children.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, they spoke to pupils to discuss their views 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 considered responses received on Ofsted's survey, Parent View. They met with parents at the school gates. Inspectors also considered responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Matthew Fearn-Davies, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Donna Moulds

Ofsted Inspector

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