

Inspection of Whixall CofE Primary School

Brownsbrook, Whixall, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire SY13 2SB

Inspection dates:	11 and 12 February 2025
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Nicola Brayford. This school is part of the Fields Multi Academy 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), Nicola Brayford, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Nicholson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Whixall CofE Primary School places pupils at the heart of everything it does. Most pupils say the school is 'like a second family'. Staff work closely with parents and carers to build positive relationships. Parents are delighted with the support they receive. One parent's comment was typical of many when they said, 'An ethos of kindness, inclusion and community shines out.'

Pupils brim with enthusiasm and love learning. For the most part, they fulfil the school's high standards and achieve well. However, children in the early years do not achieve as well as the school expects.

The school has high expectations for pupils' conduct and behaviour. Pupils are polite and well mannered. There is a purposeful and amiable environment in classrooms and around the school. Pupils understand the importance of tolerance and respect. Underpinning this are the school's values. Pupils say these 'help us and others to get on well'.

Pupils benefit from a wide range of trips and external visitors which enrich the curriculum. They reflect that these experiences help them to understand what they have learned in class. For example, in history, pupils could explain how a trip to a castle had enabled them to understand their historical purpose and use.

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

The school, aided by skilled leaders across the trust, has ensured that the curriculum is designed meticulously. From the provision for two-year-olds to the end of Year 6, the school has identified the important knowledge and skills pupils need to learn over time. Pupils build on their previous learning and deepen their knowledge as they progress through the school. For example, in music, pupils in key stage 1 play musical instruments alongside the teacher. By the end of key stage 2 pupils are able to compose simple melodies independently.

Skilled subject leaders support staff effectively. For example, in key stage 1 and 2 staff deliver the curriculum as intended. Typically, teachers check pupils' learning in lessons. In most subjects they continue to check on pupils learning over time. However, in some subjects, these checks on pupils' learning are currently being developed. As a result, the school does not know how well pupils remember what has been delivered previously.

The early years curriculum is not delivered effectively. Too often, the focus of learning and activities is not clear or well thought out. This means that staff do not centre on the important learning that children need to learn and secure well. Consequently, children are not ready for their learning in key stage 1. Nevertheless, children settle well into school life in the early years. From the provision for two-year-olds, staff establish positive relationships and build children's language skills well. Children follow expected routines with little support.

The school supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. It identifies these pupils' needs quickly. Staff make adaptations to enable pupils with SEND to learn the same curriculum as their peers.

There is a positive culture of reading at this school. Pupils read widely across the different subjects. They enjoy choosing books from the 'reading bus' and 'earning stars' for reading at home. The school has rightly introduced a new system to deliver phonics. Overall, this is helping to ensure that pupils build their reading skills and knowledge on what they know already. The school makes sure that the books pupils read help them practise the sounds they are taught. However, some staff have not received the relevant training to deliver the school's phonics programme effectively. As a result, some pupils do not learn their phonics well enough.

Pupils understand their rights and responsibilities when it comes to behaviour. There is little disruption to learning in class. The school manages attendance well and works closely with families to improve attendance where necessary.

The school encourages pupils to volunteer for leadership roles, for example in leading clubs, litter picking or being part of the worship council. Pupils reflect that these opportunities help 'make our school even better.' The school changes the range of clubs on offer to accommodate pupils' requests. To support their mental health and well-being, pupils access 'mindfulness spaces' around school. They learn about wider society and diversity by exploring different faiths and cultures. This helps pupils to develop informed views and to value differences.

Staff are very proud to work at the school. They feel well supported by school leaders and feel that they work together as a team. Trustees and local governors support leaders well in making the right decisions for the pupils.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not deliver the early years curriculum as effectively as the school intends. This means that children are not well prepared as they should be to learn in key stage 1. The school should support staff to ensure that they deliver the early years curriculum as effectively and as intended.
- In some subjects, the checks staff make on pupils' learning are not as developed as they could be. As a result, in these subjects, staff do not always know how well pupils are learning over time. The school should ensure that checks on pupils' learning are made in all subjects in order to make sure they have learned what has been delivered in all subjects.

- Some staff have not received sufficient training and support to teach phonics effectively. As a result, some pupils do not learn to read quickly enough. The school should support all staff in the implementation of the school's phonics programme so as it is delivered consistently 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	143325
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10344097
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	154
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Nicholson
CEO of the trust	Nicola Brayford
Headteacher	Nicola Brayford
Website	www.whixall.shropshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is within the Diocese of Lichfield. Its most recent section 48 inspection took place in July 2023. The next section 48 inspection will be within five years of the most recent one.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club.

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 and/or sixth form 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 school leaders and have taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, the inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, trust leaders, subject leaders, groups of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector met with members of the trust and local governing body, including the chair of the trust and chair of the local governing body. He also held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and music. They met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils and viewed examples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke to subject leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Years 1, 2, and 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school.
- The inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the online staff survey. An inspector spoke to parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Barry Yeadsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Adele Mills

Ofsted Inspector

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