

Inspection of Wheelock Primary School

Crewe Road, Sandbach, Cheshire CW11 4PY

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 January 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
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 principal of this school is Sally Whitehead. This school is part of The Learning Partnership Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Dan Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Wootton.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Wheelock Primary School as an academy under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy belonging to the Wheelock family. They said that this makes them feel happy, cared for and safe. Pupils understand and follow the school 'behaviours' well. They aspire to be the best that they can be.

Pupils are polite, well mannered and thoughtful towards each other and staff. The school is built on a strong culture of respect. Pupils, including children in the early years, support each other in their learning and play. They know that staff are there to help them if they have any worries or concerns.

Promoting pupils' personal development takes precedence in the school. Pupils enjoy holding positions of responsibility, such as play leaders, mental health champions or being part of the 'article 12 squad'. They know that their opinions matter and that they are listened to. Pupils across the school particularly enjoy the clubs and competitions, many of which are run by the pupil leaders themselves.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. Pupils know that they are expected to work hard and to succeed. They take a pride in their learning. This is reflected in the high quality of work that they produce. They are keen to talk about what they have learned. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well in most subjects.

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

In the last few years, the school has experienced some considerable changes to its staffing and leadership. This has not detracted from the school's determination to provide pupils with a good quality of education. The trust and the school have created a clear, shared vision for the pupils at Wheelock. They make sure that everyone has the chance to thrive academically and personally. Typically, pupils achieve well. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

In most subjects, the curriculum is well ordered and flows from the early years through to the end of key stage 2. In the early years, the essential knowledge that children require for future learning is well thought out. However, in a small number of subjects in key stages 1 and 2, the key knowledge that pupils must learn is less clear. This means that teachers are sometimes unsure about what pupils need to know. This results in pupils not having the secure foundations on which to build new learning.

In most subjects, teachers deliver the curriculum using appropriate and well-chosen resources. Most teachers skilfully check what pupils know and remember. Teachers make sure that pupils revisit and recap previous learning so that they successfully develop their knowledge over time. Such checks are at an earlier stage of development in a few subjects. In these subjects, teachers are not as skilled in identifying the gaps in pupils' knowledge. This hinders the progress that some pupils make through the curriculum.

The school and the trust work collaboratively to ensure that staff are suitably equipped to identify pupils' additional needs accurately and quickly. Staff receive appropriate training so that they know how to support pupils with SEND effectively. The school ensures that staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum so that pupils with SEND can learn successfully alongside their peers.

Reading is threaded through the school. Key texts and books are carefully chosen to support pupils' learning across the curriculum. Pupils are eager to travel the world with their reading passports. They aim to reach the highest word count in their class, house team or across the whole school. Pupils enjoy receiving the rewards and praise for their hard work.

The teaching of phonics and early reading has been a priority for the school. Children learn about letters and the sounds that they represent as soon as they join the Reception class. Pupils practise reading using books that match the sounds that they know. Staff deliver the phonics programme with considerable expertise. They receive regular and appropriate training to ensure that the phonics programme is taught consistently well.

Pupils behave well. The school is a haven of calm where pupils learn free from distraction. They enjoy playtimes with their friends. Pupils are extremely well mannered and are highly respectful to one another. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and what makes a good friend. They are tolerant of difference and celebrate the uniqueness of everyone in the community.

The care and support that the school provides for its pupils, including for the most vulnerable, shines through all of its work. For example, the school provides carefully tailored nurture groups for pupils who experience anxiety. These are having a positive impact for those pupils most in need. Workshops linked to pupils' mental health are also on offer for parents. This enables them to be able to learn about possible strategies that they could use to support their child outside of school. This work is also proving successful in encouraging regular attendance from those pupils who exhibit the signs of school-based avoidance.

Staff appreciate that their workload and well-being are considered by the school, and the trust, before any changes are introduced. For example, the curriculum provides staff with high-quality resources that reduce the amount of preparation time.

Trustees and members of the local governing body understand their statutory duties and work collaboratively and effectively to aid the school's continued improvement.

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 identified the knowledge that it wants pupils to acquire and when this subject content should be taught. This makes it more difficult for teachers to ensure that pupils learn all that they should. The school should identify the key knowledge that pupils will learn so that they progress well through all subject curriculums.
- The school's work to check on what pupils know and remember over time is in the early stages of implementation in a few curriculum subjects. This means that teachers' checks on what pupils know are not as effective as they could be. The school should refine its methods for checking what pupils remember over time to ensure that any gaps in learning are identified and addressed.

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	142756
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10290308
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	348
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Wootton
CEO of the trust	Dan Thomas
Principal	Sally Whitehead
Website	www.wheelockprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Wheelock Primary Academy School converted to become an academy school in April 2016. When its predecessor school, Wheelock Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of The Learning Partnership Trust. This trust merged in September 2023 from two trusts: The Learning for Life Partnership and The Learning Alliance.
- The school has undergone a period of considerable change, with a high proportion of staff leaving and joining the school since the previous inspection.
- A new principal and chair of the local governing body have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school runs a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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.
- This was the first routine inspection since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any ongoing 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 early reading, English, mathematics, history and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They spoke with leaders and pupils. Inspectors also reviewed samples of work in these curriculum areas.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read with a trusted adult.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other leaders. The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the local authority. She also met with representatives from the trust, including the CEO and the chair of the board of trustees.
- An inspector met with members of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including that relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also examined the school's self-evaluation document and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. Inspectors also spoke with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Hulse

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