

Wistaston Church Lane Academy

Church Lane, Wistaston, Crewe, Cheshire CW2 8EZ

Inspection dates

2–3 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have worked hard and been successful in improving pupils' progress.
- Together with senior leaders, and with the full support of governors and the Learning for Life Partnership, the headteacher ensures that all aspects of provision, including teaching and learning, are good.
- Phonics teaching is good. The proportion of pupils in Year 1 attaining the expected standard in the national phonics screening check has been well above average for the last three years.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress. At the end of Year 6 in 2018, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was higher than other pupils nationally. All pupils attained highly in reading at the end of Years 6 and 2 and their attainment in mathematics was strong.
- Currently, some pupils do not achieve to their best, particularly in writing and mathematics, because they are not sufficiently challenged in class.

In some year groups, too few opportunities are provided for pupils to practise their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from good teaching. They enjoy learning and make strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- Across the school, including in the early years, teaching is good. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong and productive.
- Pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum with many educational visits. However, leaders do not to monitor pupils' progress in all subjects.
- Pupils' attendance is well above average. Pupils attend regularly because they find learning interesting. Aspects of their behaviour are impeccable. Pupils say that they feel safe at school and that bullying is rare.
- Children make good progress in the Reception classes and are well equipped for their learning in Year 1 and beyond.
- The school's work to foster pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their appreciation of British values, is good.
- Most parents are very positive about the school, which they say is much improved. Parents are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that all pupils are challenged to achieve their absolute best, especially in mathematics and writing
 - making sure that ample opportunities are provided for pupils to practise and refine their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by implementing procedures to closely monitor pupils' progress in subjects including history, geography and science.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have resolved most of the areas for improvement identified at the time of the previous inspection. Together with teachers and teaching assistants, leaders have raised standards across the school, including for disadvantaged pupils. In addition, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and the early years provision. However, there is more work to be done to consolidate improvements, address weaknesses in writing and challenge pupils to achieve their best.
- Middle leaders make a good contribution to the school's improvement. They know exactly what the school is aiming to achieve and are keen to play their part in improving the quality of teaching and learning. They are conversant with developments in their specialist subjects and share their knowledge and skills with other teachers. Leaders check the quality of work in pupils' books and ensure that teachers' planning matches pupils' needs and the curriculum.
- Staff morale is high. All staff are proud to work at the school, which they say is much improved since the previous inspection. Staff are particularly appreciative of the professional development available to them through the trust and beyond. Staff are of the view that their recent training on developing pupils' fluency in writing, and their problem-solving skills in mathematics, is helping to raise standards.
- Senior leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively to support disadvantaged pupils academically and ensure that they can participate in all aspects of school life, including educational trips and visits. At the end of Year 6 in 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress in all subjects was strong. Their attainment in all subjects was higher than that of other pupils nationally at both the expected and higher standard. Disadvantaged pupils currently in the school are making strong progress in a wide range of subjects.
- The leadership of SEND is effective. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is trained well and works in partnership with different specialists to ensure that the personal, social and educational needs of pupils with SEND are met. Clear procedures are in place for monitoring pupils' progress and the impact of small-group interventions.
- Pupils benefit from an interesting curriculum, which engages them in learning and secures their strong progress. Pupils also participate in a range of after-school activities to improve their singing and arts and crafts skills. Pupils pursue their interests in reading, writing, mathematics and film through various clubs.
- The physical education and sport funding is well spent to develop the skills of staff in teaching various sporting activities, including gymnastics. Pupils are very competitive and have been successful in various sporting competitions. Pupils have won national recognition for their performance in athletics and football. Funding is used to purchase sports equipment, widen participation in sports and to train pupils and lunchtime supervisors as sports leaders.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their appreciation of British values, is good. Pupils are aware of the major world

religions and celebrate festivals and traditions linked with Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. They are increasingly aware of cultural diversity. Pupils enjoy art, languages, music, drama and play various brass and percussion instruments. They visit the theatre and frequent various museums and local places of interest.

- Pupils have a deep empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. They raise money for various worthy causes, including cancer charities, and participate in national fundraising events, raising funds for children in need. Pupils enjoy having their say, which they do on the school council. They regularly put democratic principles into practice and are involved in interviewing job applicants for various positions in the school.
- Parents and carers who spoke with inspectors, as well as most of those who completed the inspection questionnaire, were very positive about all aspects of school life. Parents typically comment that: 'I cannot praise the staff, both education and care, highly enough for everything they do for my child... it's a lovely school in a busy village. My children all love it there, they are making so much progress.' All parents said that communication is good, and their children are safe and happy at school.
- The school receives effective support from the trust, which is helping to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. The education director for primary schools knows which areas of provision need further development and has made it a priority to monitor the school's work to improve the quality of writing. In addition, the director is helping senior leaders and teachers improve outcomes for the most able pupils.

Governance of the school

- Advisory board members who are responsible for the school's governance know the school exceptionally well. They regularly visit the school and have specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, teaching and learning, and the curriculum. Governors know where the school's strengths lie, as well as what it needs to do to improve. Their experience in education places them well to both challenge and support senior leaders.
- The headteacher reports to both governors and the multi-academy trust's standards committee and is held to account for all aspects of the school's provision. Governors know that there is more work to be done to improve standards in writing and raise levels of attainment, particularly for the most able. They ensure that they keep abreast of developments in education and that their safeguarding training is current.
- The trust supports the school well on matters relating to staffing and resources and has worked closely with senior leaders to improve the school buildings and premises.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school and staff are highly vigilant. The school has a current safeguarding policy available on its website, which has been developed with close reference to the latest government guidelines on keeping children safe in education.

- Designated safeguarding leaders are trained to a high standard. Staff are trained well to spot signs of neglect and abuse and know precisely what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a child. Staff and governors have had 'Prevent' duty training, which is part of the government's agenda for tackling radicalisation and extremism.
- All appropriate checks are made on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Educational visits are risk assessed to ensure pupils' safety. Risk assessments are regularly carried out to ensure the safety and security of school premises.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers and teaching assistants are trained to a high standard. Most teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' individual learning needs and have high expectations of them. Teachers make learning interesting, use good questioning techniques and encourage pupils to participate in learning. As a result, pupils enjoy discovering new things and make strong progress in a range of subjects.
- Teachers encourage pupils to present their written work clearly and accurately. Pupils regularly write about their school trips. Recently they gave interesting written accounts of their visit to Bramwell Hall, where they dressed up in Tudor period clothing. Pupils use their good grammar, punctuation and spelling skills well to document their science experiments and produce pen-portraits of famous natural historians such as Charles Darwin.
- Teachers take a consistent approach to helping pupils improve their writing skills. Often using a single image to stimulate pupils' imaginations, teachers are skilled at getting pupils' creative juices flowing. This was very evident in a class where pupils worked well together to describe the 'twisted, gnarled fingers of trees' featured in a picture. However, writing across the curriculum is sometimes limited. As a result, pupils' writing skills are not as refined as they could be.
- Mathematics teaching is good. Teachers focus on improving pupils' fluency and speed of recalling important mathematical facts. This is especially evident in upper key stage 2, where pupils fluently convert decimals into percentages and then into fractions. In addition, teachers insist that pupils explain their calculations and challenge them with difficult activities.
- Science teaching is effective. Pupils are increasingly participating in investigative activities. Typically, pupils are encouraged to set up experiments carefully and execute activities safely. Pupils have a good understanding of scientific language. For example, most pupils know that science is based on theories and that hypotheses are often tested through experiments.
- The teaching of reading is effective, supporting pupils' good progress and high attainment. Pupils are familiar with a wide range of authors: they regularly read in class and have strong comprehension skills. Pupils are skilled at drawing salient points from various texts and enjoy reading and writing poetry. Pupils who read for inspectors were exceptionally expressive. All gave detailed synopses of their current books.
- Teaching assistants are highly effective. Throughout the school, they support pupils of all abilities. Their work with pupils with SEND is especially strong. Teaching assistants give pupils just the right amount of support to enable them to access learning.

Thereafter, pupils are encouraged to find things out for themselves and, where possible, work independently.

- Mathematics books show that work is usually challenging. However, books also reveal that tasks set in English, mathematics and other subjects, such as history and geography, are sometimes the same for all pupils, regardless of their ability. Activities for the most able are not as challenging as they could be, with the result that too few attain the higher standards in key stage 2.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Senior leaders are very mindful of pupils' personal development and welfare. Wistonia University offers opportunities for key stage 2 pupils to think ahead and consider future education, training and employment. In addition, regular visitors encourage pupils to consider various employment opportunities, giving them insight into different careers.
- Recently, the school hosted its first careers week, to which pupils and parents were invited. Pupils listened to inspirational speakers and participated in various career workshops. Pupils have met forensic experts, police officers, factory workers, a chef, local member of parliament and local footballers.
- Pupils have various opportunities to demonstrate their leadership skills through the school council. Younger pupils enjoy their roles as book monitors and enjoy helping their teachers in different activities, including sharpening pencils and organising books. Older pupils are very responsible playground buddies, who enjoy mentoring their younger peers in key stage 1 and in the early years.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. If they have a worry or concerns, they know they can talk to any member of staff and have their concerns dealt with immediately. In addition, they can approach the 'Safety Squad'. Squad members meet regularly with safeguarding leaders to discuss how to improve safety at school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors said that staff, and the new perimeter fence, make them feel safe. Almost all parents are of the view that their children are safe in school.
- Pupils know how to stay safe on the roads. Older pupils learn how to ride their bicycles sensibly and safely with due consideration for other road users. Visitors to the school, for example during anti-bullying week, help to develop pupils' appreciation of various safe and unsafe situations as well as dangers and risks.
- Pupils are fully aware of the misery that bullying can cause. They explore such matters during assemblies and through the personal, social, health and citizenship aspects of the curriculum. Pupils who spoke with inspectors indicated that bullying is rare. Younger pupils said that, if bullying happens, it is always 'sorted out'. Older pupils said that racism is, '... when you mock someone, or make fun of their language or appearance'. They also said that racism never happens in school and that if it did, the culprit would be moved onto 'the lights system'. Pupils have a limited understanding of homophobic bullying.

- Pupils regularly attend the breakfast club, where they can catch up with their friends and play various games. They can also eat a healthy breakfast. The club provides pupils with a good start to the day.
- Pupils have a good appreciation of internet safety. They know how to surf the internet safely and use mobile phones, games consoles, computers and laptops cautiously. When asked for top internet safety tips, all pupils agreed, 'if you see a picture you don't like, tell your mum', 'never show your address or say that you are going on holiday', and, 'don't friend people you don't know or reply to messages from strangers'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils rarely miss a day of school because they like to learn and have strong bonds with staff. Attendance has been above average for the last three years and continues to be high this year.
- During the inspection, pupils' behaviour was good. Pupils listen diligently in class, move around the school sensibly and safely, and ensure that the school is clean and tidy. Pupils greeted inspectors on corridors and warmly welcomed them into the school.
- Wistaston is a calm and orderly school where pupils are interested in learning and discovering new things. All pupils, and the children in the Reception classes, wear their uniforms with pride and are very respectful towards staff, each other and visitors.
- Pupils enjoy coming together for assembly. This was evident as key stage 1 pupils settled down to their Easter assembly. After entering the hall in silence and using sign language to wish each other a good afternoon, pupils considered the importance of Easter and what it means to them.
- Pupils who spoke with inspectors said that behaviour is good most of the time, apart from the occasional 'fall-out'. Pupils indicated, 'everyone gets on well in this school' and said that if there are arguments during lunchtimes, 'the dinner ladies and staff always sort it out'.
- All staff who completed the inspection survey indicate that pupils' behaviour is at least good and stated that the school has a culture which encourages high aspirations for all pupils. Staff manage pupils' behaviour exceptionally well. Almost all parents who completed Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and all parents who spoke with inspectors, are of the view that behaviour is good.
- The school behaviour logs show that infringements of the rules are rare. All poor behaviour is logged and followed up with parents and staff as appropriate. Fixed-term exclusions are exceptionally rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of both key stages 1 and 2 has improved. For example, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standard in reading at the end of key stage 2 in 2018 was above average. In key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining greater depth in

reading and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average and much improved on previous years.

- Pupils' progress in reading and mathematics has improved and was average in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2018. While writing has also improved, pupils' progress in this subject was below average.
- Inspection evidence, including work in pupils' books and the school's own data and assessment information, indicates that pupils make good progress in most classes in a range of subjects. Procedures to assess pupils' progress in science, geography and history are not fully implemented. However, workbooks show that pupils make consistently strong progress in these subjects.
- Pupils enjoy reading. Their reading records indicate that most read frequently, both in school and at home. Pupils who read for the inspectors did so fluently and with good intonation. Those who find reading difficult use their phonics skills and knowledge well to sound out and read unfamiliar words. The proportion of Year 1 pupils secure at the national phonics screening check has been well above average for the last three years.
- Pupils like to express themselves. For example, in workbooks there is strong evidence of good poetry, creative writing and factual writing about the evacuation of children during the Second World War. Some pupils are good letter writers and use powerful words and interesting adjectives to bring their written work to life. While standards in writing are improving, writing across the curriculum is inconsistent and sometimes limited.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is strong. Their attainment is rising as their depth of understanding and problem-solving skills improve. Across the school, workbooks show many instances of pupils applying their calculation skills to practical activities. In geography, pupils produce charts and tables to calculate average rainfall in England at different times of the year.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress in reading was above average and average in mathematics and writing. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment at both the expected and higher standard was at least as good as that of other pupils nationally. Currently, most pupils in this group are making the same strong progress as their peers across the school and in a wide range of subjects.
- Workbooks indicate that pupils with SEND make consistently strong progress from their different starting points. They benefit from good specialist teaching as well as from learning alongside their peers.
- The school's own data indicates that attainment is rising in most classes. A small minority of pupils are already attaining greater depth in key stage 1. A few are attaining at the higher standards in key stage 2, particularly in reading. However, some pupils, especially the most able, are not reaching the standards of which they are capable because they are not consistently challenged in class.
- Transition arrangements with local high schools are good and extended for some pupils, particularly those with SEND. At the end of Year 6, almost all pupils are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in their learning in high school.

Early years provision

Good

- All aspects of the early years provision, including leadership and management and the quality of teaching, are good. Children learn in a highly productive and friendly environment, where they form close bonds with staff and flourish.
- When children enter the Reception classes, most have the knowledge and skills typical for their age. Children make good progress and acquire well-developed reading, writing and calculation skills. By the time they leave the Reception classes, a higher than average proportion have reached a good level of development and are ready for their learning in Year 1. This has been the pattern for the last three years.
- All groups of children, including those with SEND and disadvantaged children, are currently making consistently good progress in a wide range of learning areas.
- Staff are trained well and have a good understanding of how young children learn. Their SEND training helps them to communicate very effectively with children with visual impairments and other specific learning needs.
- Early years provision is well organised and structured. Indoor provision is exciting and engaging and clearly linked to the different areas of learning. Consequently, children enjoy, for example, building in the construction area, engaging in role-play and refining their artistic skills.
- Children are curious, cooperative and very welcoming. They enjoy finding out new things and exploring the world around them. This is evident during outdoor learning and play activities where children demonstrate sustained concentration, for instance, in the mud kitchen. They weigh, measure and stir mixtures to make cakes.
- Teachers challenge children, particularly in writing. Almost all can form letters correctly. The most able routinely start sentences with capital letters, use correct spacing between words and make sure that their letters sit correctly on lines. Children challenge each other with 'tricky problems', as seen during a mathematics activity where they asked peers to add different numbers, such as 1+2, and guess the weight of various items.
- Teachers and teaching assistants focus on developing children's speaking skills. This was exemplified in a session where children used their phonics skills to decipher various words to help them find different coloured eggs. Children were encouraged to describe their activities in full sentences, using as many interesting adjectives as they could think of.
- Children behave well and listen to adults carefully. For example, during morning 'wake-up' sessions, they eagerly congregate on the carpet, sit well together and answer questions enthusiastically. Children behave sensibly and safely when playing outdoors on their wheeled toys. They stop activities immediately when asked to do so, tidy up with the minimum of fuss and closely follow instructions.
- All parents who spoke with inspectors were highly positive about all aspects of the early years provision. Typically, they say that their children are safe and looked after well. Parents say that communication between the school and home is good. Parents regularly share information on their children's learning with staff and take advantage of various 'stay and play' activities, where they learn alongside their children.

- Staff look after children well, making sure that all welfare requirements are met. Safeguarding is effective. The same well-established procedures in operation in key stages 1 and 2 operate in the early years.
- While the proportion of children attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above average and rising, few children make outstanding progress. The most able children do not always make the excellent progress of which they are capable. In addition, boys' progress in writing is not quite as good as that of girls. Leaders have prioritised these areas, which are included in the school's development plans.

School details

Unique reference number	141568
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10087872

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Sponsor-led academy
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of the Local advisory board	John Harrison
Principal	James Bancroft
Telephone number	01270 663619
Website	www.wcla.co.uk/
Email address	admin@wistaston.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

Information about this school

- Wistaston Church Lane Academy is a larger than average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average and the proportion who have an education, health and care plan is above average.
- All children in the Reception classes attend full-time. Pupils attend a breakfast club which is managed by trustees and formed part of this inspection.
- In the last two years, extensive internal and external refurbishments have taken place, to include a new reception area, meeting rooms and library. Early years facilities have been improved.

- The principal, who led the school in an acting capacity at the time of the previous inspection, is now the school's substantive headteacher.
- In September 2017, Wistaston joined The Learning for Life Partnership, which is a multi-academy trust based in East Cheshire.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils learn to read. Five observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 95 text responses submitted by parents during the inspection and met informally with parents at the start of the school day. Inspectors also considered 95 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 13 members of staff were also considered. There were no responses to the pupil survey. Inspectors scrutinised the school's own surveys of parents' views.
- Meetings were held with three governors, including the chair of the governing body, and three members of the Learning for Life Partnership. A meeting was held with the school's improvement partner, the director for the trust's schools.
- Inspectors met with various school leaders, including those responsible for English, mathematics and science. Meetings were also held with leaders responsible for the early years provision, disadvantaged pupils and provision for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included the school's checks on the quality of teaching and reviews of its own performance, development plans, information about pupils' progress, records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Timothy Gartside	Ofsted Inspector
Mandy Dodd	Ofsted Inspector

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