

Inspection of a good school: Smallwood CofE Primary School

School Lane, Sandbach CW11 2UR

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

Smallwood CofE Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Iestyn Lewis. This school is part of the Smallwood 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), Iestyn Lewis, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Tom Pear.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils appreciate the warm and nurturing relationships that they enjoy with staff and with each other at this small and happy school. Many pupils, who shared their views with the inspector, described their school as a family where everyone is welcome.

Pupils value the close links that the school enjoys with the local village. For example, they look forward to the opportunity to be crowned 'Rose King' or 'Queen', where they lead a procession from the school around the village.

The school has high ambitions for pupils' learning. It expects them to work hard and to do their best. Most pupils rise to meet the school's expectations. They eagerly look forward to their lessons each day. Overall, pupils achieve well through the curriculum.

Pupils proudly follow the school's rules to be kind and safe. Older pupils enjoy working as buddies, where they help the children in the Reception class to settle into school life well and quickly make new friends.

Pupils participate in a variety of educational experiences to enhance their learning beyond the classroom. For example, they have enjoyed trips to a museum and an art gallery. Pupils also spoke fondly about residential visits. Pupils enjoy singing in the school choir and learning to play different musical instruments.

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

Leaders and staff have worked collaboratively to implement a curriculum that is ambitious and well designed. The key information that pupils should learn is introduced in small,

well-ordered steps from the beginning of the early years to the end of Year 6. This supports them to build on their prior learning effectively.

The school provides staff with helpful curriculum guidance. This means that, for the most part, they teach subjects confidently. Mostly, staff use assessment systems well to identify any gaps or misconceptions in pupils' learning quickly. However, weaknesses in some pupils' written communication skills and lack of fluency with multiplication facts sometimes go unchecked. This means that some pupils lack the foundations on which to build when they move on to more complex content.

In the main, pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), learn well in many subjects across the curriculum. However, in a small number of subjects, where the changes to the curriculums are relatively new, pupils sometimes struggle to connect much earlier content with new learning.

Children in the Reception class enjoy listening to carefully chosen stories and nursery rhymes that spark their interest and enthusiasm for reading. The school has ensured that staff are well trained so that they deliver the school's phonics programme successfully. Staff make sure that pupils practise reading from books which contain the sounds that they know. This helps children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, to quickly gain in confidence and become successful readers. Any pupils who struggle to keep up with the pace of the phonics programme are effectively supported so that they learn to read well.

Older pupils look forward to completing online quizzes when they have finished reading a book. They also enjoy receiving the 'shine' award in recognition of their good reading habits. Most older pupils read well and show secure understanding of what they have read.

Staff have been well trained to quickly and accurately identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils learn the same curriculum content as their peers. They achieve well from their starting points.

Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work. Learning is rarely disrupted by incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils walk sensibly around the school. They play well together at breaktimes. The school effectively promotes the importance of regular attendance at school. Pupils attend well.

Pupils have different opportunities to develop their talents and interests as part of the provision for their personal development. For example, pupils enjoy taking part in theatrical productions. Older pupils spoke animatedly about the upcoming afternoon tea for parents and carers, which they are responsible for organising. This involves shopping for the ingredients and preparing the food.

Pupils enjoy taking on various roles, such as working as school councillors and members of the eco-committee. They also value overseeing the feeding and looking after of the school's chickens. Opportunities such as these help to develop pupils' leadership skills and confidence.

The trust shares the school's high ambition for its pupils. It understands and fulfils its roles well overall. The vast majority of staff are proud to work at the school. They value the way that the school supports them to manage their workload, for example, by reducing marking expectations. Staff also appreciate the regular 'Well-being Wednesdays' meetings, where they can get together and talk about any concerns. Most parents, who shared their views, also spoke very positively about the school.

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 address weaknesses in some pupils' written communication skills and lack of fluency with number well enough. This means that some pupils do not have sufficient fluency in these fundamental skills. The school should ensure that these weaknesses are quickly addressed so that pupils have the necessary foundations to support them with more complex learning.
- The improvements to the delivery of a small number of curriculums are relatively new. This means that sometimes pupils find it difficult to link earlier learning with new content. The school should ensure that the recent changes to the curriculum have the desired impact so that pupils know more and remember more in the longer term.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2019.

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	140894
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10348303
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	179
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Tom Pear
CEO of the trust	Iestyn Lewis
Headteacher	Iestyn Lewis
Website	www.smallwood.cheshire.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	19 and 20 March 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and chair of the trust have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school makes use of one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school which is part of the Diocese of Chester. The most recent section 48 inspection, for schools of a religious character, took place in May 2018. The next section 48 inspection is scheduled to take place in the academic year 2025/26.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, she met with leaders, discussed curriculums, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. She also observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector considered other subjects on the school's curriculum. She talked to the leaders of these subjects.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with trustees, including the chair of the trust. She met with a representative of the local authority. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese.
- The inspector spoke with different groups of pupils to gather their views of the school and held discussions about their behaviour and learning. She also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtime.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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 inspector met with those responsible for safeguarding at the school. She scrutinised a range of documentation in relation to safeguarding. She also spoke with governors, staff, parents and pupils about safeguarding.
- The inspector considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders and staff. This included the school's priority action plan, governor reports and the school's self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

Louise McArdle, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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