

Witton Church Walk CofE Primary School

Church Walk, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5QQ

Inspection dates

11–12 May 2017

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	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and other senior leaders have swiftly and decisively tackled a dip in the school's performance. Their determined leadership has strengthened the quality of teaching and learning. Pupils' rates of progress are now also accelerating quickly.
- School leaders have been successful in creating a culture across the school in which all aspects of pupils' development are equally valued, reflecting the school's vision: 'Every door open and every gift unlocked.' Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong.
- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good. Teachers display good subject knowledge and are quick to pick up on pupils' errors and misconceptions. Teaching assistants provide effective support that helps move pupils' learning forward.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are good. Pupils get on well together and say that they enjoy coming to school. Virtually every parent who responded to the Parent View survey confirmed that their children were happy in school. Rates of attendance are in line with the national average and are improving.
- The school provides pupils with a rich and engaging curriculum, which is further enhanced by well-planned enrichment days that focus on a particular theme or subject. Pupils are encouraged to think like historians or make observations like scientists, and consequently develop a good range of skills across the curriculum.
- Children get off to a strong start to their time in school because provision in early years is good. They progress well from their starting points and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development is rising. While outcomes are improving, there are still some inconsistencies. Some pupils are still having to make up ground because previous improvements in mathematics were too slow. On occasions, a lack of challenge in the work set slows pupils' progress; this is particularly true in phonics.
- Governors are highly committed to the school and provide leaders with good support. However, neither the governors nor the leaders use performance data rigorously to accurately measure the school's performance against challenging national benchmarks.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent improvements so that outcomes for pupils are consistently good by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress in phonics so that a higher proportion attain the expected standard by the end of Year 1
 - ensuring that groups of pupils are provided with the level of challenge needed to move their learning on at a good pace
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that all leaders, including governors, develop their skills and experience in using data to evaluate the school's performance against appropriately challenging benchmarks.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and senior leaders have responded swiftly and decisively to the disappointing results in 2016. They recognised that strategies for improving outcomes in mathematics were not having the desired impact, reviewed and amended their strategy and redoubled their improvement efforts. Careful analysis led to other key areas for improvement being identified and leaders' subsequent actions are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Outcomes for pupils are improving. A corner has been turned and the school is now moving ahead strongly.
- The headteacher's determination to ensure that every pupil at Witton Church Walk develops the broadest possible range of skills and knowledge, and so is well equipped for future life, underpins the school's work. Her vision is shared by other leaders, governors and staff. Their efforts are bearing fruit, and pupils are clearly growing in self-confidence, developing the resilience needed to tackle challenges and learning to value each other's strengths and differences.
- Work in pupils' books and the school's tracking of assessment information confirm that leaders' efforts to improve levels of achievement are having the desired impact. Improvements have been made in a number of areas. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising and pupils are developing an impressive range of skills and knowledge in other areas of the curriculum. Leaders recognise, though, that there is scope for further improvement, for example in pupils' attainment in phonics, and acknowledge that some pupils have ground to make up because previous improvements in mathematics were not strong enough.
- The work of middle leaders, including those responsible for early years, for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, for curriculum development and for specific areas of the curriculum, is having an increasingly positive impact on improvements. Leaders are becoming more skilled at checking on the quality of teaching and learning and providing support and challenge where it is needed. Leaders across the school now need to further develop their understanding and use of performance data, particularly for making comparisons with national benchmarks.
- The curriculum is a key strength at Witton Church Walk. Pupils are encouraged to think and act like historians, such as when researching information about Ancient Egypt, or to develop scientific skills to help them conduct experiments and draw conclusions from them. Very good use is made of the school's outdoor environment, and pupils thoroughly enjoy learning in the woodland area or taking part in activities in their yurt. The strength of the curriculum ensures that pupils develop strong subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Extra-curricular activities, including gardening and birdwatching clubs, add further variety to the curriculum.
- Leaders ensure that specific, targeted funding is used increasingly effectively. Pupil premium funding is used well to overcome specific barriers to learning experienced by disadvantaged pupils in the school, such as in speech and language development. Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well used

and is having a positive impact on their learning. The primary physical education and sport funding allows pupils to access different sporting activities, including football, netball and dodgeball, promoting teamwork and developing their sporting skills.

- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong, and pupils have a good appreciation of core British values such as respect for others and individual liberty. Pupils are also able to talk about the rights of the child, such as access to education and a safe place to live, and have actively taken part in charity fundraising to support children less fortunate than themselves.
- Staff say that they enjoy working at the school, and are clearly very proud of the work that their school does. They appreciate the different professional development opportunities that they have and the positive impact that these have had on their own practice.
- Despite the decline in published data in 2016, the local authority maintain a 'light-touch' relationship with the school. This reflects the confidence that they have in school leaders and recognises the improvements that had been made since the previous inspection. The school actively works with other local schools on a range of school improvement activities, such as moderation of pupils' work, and also engages independent, external support for school self-evaluation.

Governance of the school

- Governors show a high level of commitment to the school and share leaders' ambitions for its future. They play an active role in the life of the school, both through their involvement in school events and by taking on 'special responsibilities' which link governors to different aspects of the school's work. Governors ensure that procedures for staff performance management and decisions about pay progression are fair and appropriately rigorous.
- Governors carefully scrutinise the work of the school and have a sound awareness of its key strengths and areas for improvement. They ensure that they are kept up to date with teaching and learning matters by talking to subject leaders. They receive highly detailed information about the school's performance from the headteacher, and minutes of governing body meetings show that they consistently challenge and question leaders. However, governors themselves are aware that their knowledge and understanding of school performance data could be strengthened so that they can more accurately assess how well the school is performing, particularly when making comparisons with national benchmarks.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- School leaders have been successful in establishing a strong safeguarding culture across the school. Careful checks are made on staff, governors and volunteers to confirm that they are suitable people to work with children, and the school maintains detailed records of these checks. The school site is well maintained and secure. An electronic door-entry system ensures that only authorised staff and visitors are able to access the main school building.

- Staff and governors receive regular training to keep them up to date with current good practice in child protection and safeguarding, and these messages are reinforced effectively with notices around school. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns about a child's well-being, and leaders ensure that any such concerns are rigorously followed up. The school's pastoral staff work well with other agencies to make sure that vulnerable families receive the support that they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school is good and is continuing to improve. Teachers display secure subject knowledge across a wide range of subjects, and this enables them to quickly pick up on errors or misconceptions that they spot in class or in pupils' written work. They are well supported by the school's skilled and enthusiastic teaching assistants, who provide effective support for pupils who require additional help with behaviour or learning. Relationships between adults and pupils are warm and positive, and this contributes to the school's encouraging atmosphere for learning.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved markedly over the last year so that mathematics is now taught effectively. Pupils are developing their skills in mathematical fluency and recall, so that they become more confident and accurate in performing calculations. Teachers provide them with plenty of opportunities to develop their problem-solving skills, and the school's 'guided reasoning' approach is proving effective in encouraging pupils to think carefully and be able to explain how they tackled a mathematical challenge.
- Writing is taught effectively throughout the school. There is a clear progression in the skills that pupils learn to use, and pupils apply these well so that their written work develops in both style and content. In many classes pupils are able to apply their writing skills well within other areas of the curriculum, such as in writing diary entries or recounts in history.
- Good-quality teaching of reading ensures that, by the time they leave key stage 2, pupils have developed secure skills in reading with fluency and understanding. The school actively promotes enjoyment of reading and a love of books and many pupils become keen readers, able to talk about the impact of a particular extract from a book or to discuss their favourite authors, who include Michael Morpurgo and Jacqueline Wilson. However, the teaching of phonics is not as strong. Teachers do not develop pupils' phonics skills with sufficient urgency and so, for some pupils, learning in phonics is not challenging enough.
- While the majority of the work that teachers set for pupils is accurately and appropriately matched to their learning needs, there are times when this is not the case. In particular, while there is now more evidence of the most able pupils being challenged by their work, the same level of challenge and expectation is less often seen in work and activities provided for other pupils and so their progress slows.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- One parent's comment about the school, which was typical of many others, was that: 'all children, regardless of ability, are nurtured and welcomed'. This very accurately captures the main strength of the school's provision for pupils' personal development and welfare. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive and pupils say that staff look after them well.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of different aspects of safety, including fire and road safety, and understand how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Pupils are also aware of precautions to take when using the internet, such as not revealing personal details online, and know how to report inappropriate content.
- Pupils are aware that different types of bullying exist, including bullying stemming from racism or homophobia, but say that incidents of bullying are rare in their school. They are confident that teachers will deal effectively with any problems that they might have. Older pupils in particular display a mature and thoughtful understanding of issues relating to equality of opportunity.
- Pupils show a good understanding of the concept of democracy, talking about recent elections in France and the forthcoming general election. A number of pupils have themselves been elected or chosen to serve on pupil bodies, such as the school council, ethos group or curriculum committee. These pupils clearly enjoy the added responsibility that their roles bring.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Their conduct around school is good and they move around the building sensibly. At break times they enjoy using the school's extensive and well-equipped grounds, and when the weather is wet they play board games and chat happily in their classrooms.
- Throughout the school, pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They listen well to their teachers and their classmates and settle quickly to their work. Standards of presentation are good in all year groups, demonstrating the pride that pupils take in their work. Pupils' enjoyment of school is further illustrated by attendance rates which are typically in line with the national average and improving steadily.
- Pupils say that behaviour across the school is typically good and they like the clear traffic-light system that the school uses to encourage good behaviour. Where pupils do need extra help to manage their own behaviour, teaching assistants provide sensitive and effective support. Only occasionally, when learning is less engaging, do pupils allow themselves to drift off-task.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, results of national assessments at the end of key stage 2 showed that pupils' attainment and progress in reading and writing were below the national average and in mathematics were significantly below that level. There was a similar picture for attainment in key stage 1, with reading, writing and mathematics all being below national average, as was the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in

the Year 1 phonics check.

- These results represented a sharp dip in the school's performance following a period of steady improvement in attainment over the previous three years. However, while attainment had been improving, progress in mathematics had remained stubbornly well below average, despite leaders' improvement efforts.
- School leaders were galvanised into action by these disappointing results and their decisive response has had a positive impact. A corner has been turned and evidence seen in pupils' work, and the school's own tracking, show that overall standards of achievement for pupils currently in the school are recovering quickly. However, there is still room for further improvement as outcomes are not yet consistently good. Overall standards in mathematics are still recovering, having been too low for too long. For current pupils there are still some inconsistencies and rates of progress could be further accelerated, particularly in phonics.
- The majority of pupils in the school are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, and their work shows that an increasing proportion are working at the level expected for their age. In mathematics, pupils are becoming increasingly confident in tackling written problems and explaining their reasoning. Gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding, a legacy of previously slow progress, are now being filled. In English, pupils' vocabulary is widening and the level of accuracy in their writing is increasing. Consequently, pupils are better prepared for moving from one key stage to another, or preparing to move on to secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check had been typically in line with the national average before dipping below that level in 2016. A recovery has taken place and attainment in phonics is improving. However, given pupils' starting points at the beginning of key stage 1, current progress is steady and too few pupils are making accelerated progress.
- In recent years, too few of the most able pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing or mathematics. This has particularly been the case in key stage 2. There are, however, clear improvements in the progress and attainment of the most able pupils currently in key stage 2, and more of them are now working at a deeper level. Progress for the most able pupils in key stage 1 is not accelerating as quickly, and only a small proportion of pupils are currently working at the expected standard at 'greater depth'.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils vary between cohorts and are influenced by a range of different factors. Evidence indicates that most of the disadvantaged pupils currently in school are now typically making good progress in their learning from their differing starting points. This is because leaders identify the barriers to learning faced by these pupils and address them by providing additional academic and pastoral support. This represents good use of the school's pupil premium funding.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are progressing well from their different starting points. They benefit from well-planned and appropriately targeted support which helps them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding. This illustrates that the school makes effective use of the additional funding that it uses to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Early years provision

Good

- Children enter Nursery with skills and knowledge below those that are typical for their age in most areas of learning, and which are usually noticeably weaker in communication and language and personal development. Those children who join the school at the beginning of Reception class also do so with skills and knowledge which are below those that are typical for their age. Leaders recognise the specific needs that many children have and work with external agencies and specialists to provide additional, targeted support.
- The quality of teaching across early years is good. Teachers know individual children well and are careful to ensure that they address children's different learning needs by adapting activities and adjusting the level of language and questioning that they use. Provision both indoors and outside is bright and engaging, and children's learning is moved on both by activities that adults lead and ones that children initiate themselves.
- Children quickly develop good learning habits, getting on well with each other and developing their skills in sharing and turn-taking, so that behaviour in the early years is good. There are warm and positive relationships between adults and children, and staff are diligent in ensuring that children are safe and well cared for. All statutory welfare requirements are met.
- Parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their children's learning throughout their time in early years, from contributing to initial assessments as children start school to being able to look at examples of their children's learning online. The vast majority of parents say that they are very happy with early years provision.
- Leadership of the early years is good. The early years leader ensures that children's learning and progress are tracked carefully using an electronic system, and staff use this information well to plan for future learning. The leader has a clear and accurate awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in the provision and is ambitious to continue to build upon the impressive improvements made in early years.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of their time in early years has increased each year and in 2016 was broadly in line with the national average. The progress of children who attract additional funding through the early years pupil premium has not improved at the same rate, and the early years leader is now focused on ensuring that support for this group of children has a greater impact.

School details

Unique reference number	111389
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10024440

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	315
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Sheen
Headteacher	Kathryn Magiera
Telephone number	01606 288128
Website	www.wittonchurchwalk.co.uk
Email address	admin@wittonwalk.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 September 2012

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- In the early years, children attend the Nursery class part time. Those who are in the Reception class attend on a full-time basis.
- In 2016 the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for achievement in Year 6.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school, and were joined on some visits to lessons by the headteacher. Inspectors also looked at pupils' work in books, records of children's learning in the early years and other information about pupils' attainment and progress.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with two groups of pupils. They also talked informally with pupils around the school and in the playground and took account of seven responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered the 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and talked informally with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors met a group of five governors. They also had discussions with staff in school, including the leader responsible for the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, the leader for the early years and the leaders for English, mathematics, phonics and curriculum development.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives of the local authority and the diocese, and also with the external consultant engaged by the school to provide school improvement support.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included information about pupils' attainment and progress, the school's reviews of its own performance, governing body meeting records and adviser reports. The inspector also examined safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

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Lyn Pender	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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