

Inspection of St Paul's CofE Primary School, Utkinton and Cotebrook

Quarry Bank, Utkinton, Tarporley, Cheshire CW6 0LA

Inspection dates: 11 and 12 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a small school with a big heart. Pupils, including those who attend the provision for two-year-olds, enjoy being taught in small classes. Pupils respond well to the high expectations which staff have of them. This helps all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well.

Leaders expect pupils to behave in a positive manner when working and playing. Pupils generally behave well in the classroom and around school. Staff give individualised support to those pupils who find managing their own behaviour a challenge. Staff intervene swiftly and effectively if any behaviour issues arise. This means that pupils are soon back on track with their learning. Incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly. This helps pupils to feel happy and safe. Pupils trust staff and know who they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns.

Pupils are proud of their school. They value the opportunities that they have to take part in extra-curricular activities, both at school and across the trust. For example, pupils take great joy in looking after the school garden and they enjoy competing in sports tournaments with other schools. Leaders ensure that all pupils' talents and interests are fostered well.

Pupils said that their school is like a family. Playtime is harmonious, with pupils of all ages playing together. Lunchtimes are also calm. Older pupils enjoy spending time with and chatting to the children in the early years. Pupils are well mannered when interacting with staff and with one another.

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

The new leadership team has successfully refined the curriculum to ensure that it is ambitious. The curriculum has been carefully tailored to match the age and stage of each pupil. In most subject curriculums, leaders have identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and the order in which it will be taught. Typically, the curriculums allow pupils to build up their knowledge well over time. However, due to the weaknesses in the previous curriculum, some pupils have developed gaps in their knowledge. This means that they do not have a solid foundation on which to build new learning.

Children in the early years through to pupils in Year 6 share a love of reading. In the early years, children enjoy songs and rhymes. They show interest in familiar stories. Pupils across the rest of the school enjoy the range of high-quality books that are available for them to read. The oldest pupils talked confidently about novels that they enjoy.

There is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the early years and key stage 1. This ensures that children in the early years gain a secure grounding in letters and sounds so that many pupils read fluently and confidently by the end of

Year 2. Pupils who need extra support are quickly identified and helped to catch up. Leaders ensure that pupils read books which are matched to the sounds that they know.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge and regularly check pupils' prior learning. This enables teachers to skilfully adapt their teaching so that pupils' learning is secure. Leaders swiftly identify pupils with SEND. They are supported well to access the same learning as their classmates.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. This recently included a challenge to 'Grow £5' during enterprise week. Pupils from Year 1 to Year 6 worked together to manufacture, market and sell their own product. Pupils enjoy a range of visits, including the residential trip to Conwy. They are proud to take on leadership roles, such as being part of the ethos council and working as reading ambassadors.

Leaders want this school to be at the heart of the community. For example, at Easter, pupils hid eggs with messages of kindness in local villages. Leaders have prioritised pupils' awareness of diversity, for instance through visits to a synagogue and mosque. Pupils said that everyone is welcome at their school.

Most pupils arrive at school keen and ready to learn. However, a small number of pupils do not attend school as regularly as they should. This means that they miss out on some of their learning.

Governors and trustees provide effective levels of challenge and support. They have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Staff feel valued and said leaders look after their well-being and support their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Well-trained staff know how to identify safeguarding concerns. Leaders report concerns quickly and effectively. They ensure that pupils and their families get the support that they need.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are a number of pupils who do not come to school on a regular basis. This means that they miss out on important learning. This prevents them from achieving as well as they could. Leaders should support pupils and their families so that these pupils attend school regularly.

- Some previous subject curriculums were weak. As a result, pupils have some gaps in learning which means that they do not have a good enough grounding to make the most of new learning. Leaders should ensure that teachers identify, and then address, the gaps in pupils' learning.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	148203
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10290376
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	18
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neil Dixon
Headteacher	Kerry McLean (executive headteacher) Sian Simcock (head of school)
Website	www.utkintonce.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- St Paul's CofE Primary School, Utkinton and Cotebrook converted to become a Church of England academy in December 2020. When its predecessor school, Utkinton St Paul's CofE Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require improvement.
- The school is part of the Chester Diocesan Academies Trust.
- The last section 48 inspection was carried out by the Diocese of Chester in December 2018.
- There is early years provision at the school. This includes provision for two-year-old children. At the time of the inspection, there were fewer than five children on roll in the early years.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders. They have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited some lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- An inspector spoke to leaders about the curriculum and sampled pupils' work in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes, in the dining hall and when walking round the school. They discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors met with pupils from across the school to ask them about safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed documentation, which included the school's safeguarding policy, register of the checks carried out on new employees and safeguarding records.
- An inspector spoke with school leaders, the chief executive officer of the trust, the chair of the local governing board and governors.
- An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative the Diocese of Chester.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about the culture of safeguarding across the school, their workload and well-being.
- An inspector considered the views of pupils who responded to the pupil survey. This included free-text comments.
- An inspector considered the views of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted Parent View and the views of staff who responded to the staff survey. This included free-text comments.
- An inspector spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.

Inspection team

Frith Murphy, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Berry

Ofsted Inspector

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