

Inspection of a good school: Little Sutton C of E Primary School

Berwick Road, Little Sutton, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH66 4PP

Inspection date: 22 March 2022

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy in school. They know that staff care about them. Pupils get on well together. They said that staff deal with any rare incidents of bullying effectively. Pupils feel safe.

Older pupils are polite and behave well in lessons. They work hard to meet their teachers' high expectations. Some children and younger pupils have found it difficult to adapt to school routines following the disruption to their learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These pupils quickly lose focus in lessons. This affects how well they learn.

Pupils have many opportunities to develop their talents and interests. They feel privileged to represent the school in a wide range of sporting events. This helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to build their self-confidence. Pupils are proud of their recent successes in dance and football competitions.

Leaders have high expectations of staff and pupils. They have brought about rapid improvements to the curriculum in a short space of time. Parents and carers appreciate these improvements. They would readily recommend this school to others. However, the changes that leaders have made are recent. Pupils have not benefited fully from this improved curriculum. They have not built a rich body of knowledge across the curriculum.

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

New leaders and trustees have acted decisively to improve the curriculum. They have an ambitious vision for what all pupils should achieve. Staff share this vision.

Leaders have benefited from working with external consultants and other schools within the multi-academy trust. In turn, senior leaders have provided effective training for subject

leaders. This has helped to develop their expertise. Subject leaders now have greater clarity about what should be taught. They have designed well-ordered subject curriculums in several subjects. These curriculums support children to build their knowledge from the early years as they move into key stage 1 and beyond.

Some subject leaders provide effective support and guidance to teachers to enable them to deliver the curriculum well. Teachers are now more adept at identifying pupils with SEND. However, leaders' work to ensure that the individual needs of pupils with SEND are effectively met is ongoing.

Improvements to the curriculum in several subjects, and in the early years, are recent. In some subjects, new curriculums have only been introduced this academic year and leaders continue to refine them. Consequently, some teachers are not clear about what pupils need to know and remember in these subjects. This hinders how well teachers use assessment strategies to identify what pupils have learned. This also hampers how well teachers plan learning that builds on pupils' prior knowledge. Pupils do not build their learning securely over time in these subjects. This means that they do not achieve as well as they should.

Leaders have recently introduced a new phonics programme. They have ensured that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 practise their reading using books that are matched to the sounds that they know. Staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme. However, not all teachers deliver the phonics programme well. Some children in the early years and key stage 1 do not build secure phonics knowledge within lessons as a result. That said, pupils who are falling behind or have missing knowledge owing to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, are helped to catch up quickly through well-tailored extra support. This helps pupils, including those with SEND, to steadily build their reading accuracy and fluency.

Older pupils benefit from a well-organised reading curriculum. Teachers make effective use of the guidance that they receive from leaders to deliver this curriculum well. Pupils have access to a range of high-quality texts. They appreciate the stories that teachers read to them. Older pupils are avid readers. Their positive reading habits help them to achieve well. Pupils in Year 6 are well prepared for the reading challenges of the key stage 3 curriculum.

Leaders carefully consider pupils' wider development. They support all pupils to access the high-quality opportunities on offer. Pupils enjoy helping others. They welcome extra responsibilities, such as acting as school councillors, sports and play leaders, and buddies for younger pupils. These roles help pupils to play their part in ensuring that pupils behave well and do not disrupt each other's play and learning.

Staff recognise that the pace of curriculum improvement has increased the demands placed upon them. That said, they appreciate leaders' and trustees' actions to support their workload. Staff are fully on board. Their morale is high.

Leaders and trustees are supporting members of the newly formed joint academy committee to build their knowledge of the school. This will better equip committee members to offer leaders informed support and challenge.

In discussion with the executive principal, the inspectors agreed that design and technology and science may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a clear understanding of the needs of pupils and their families. All staff are well trained to keep pupils safe. Staff know how to identify safeguarding concerns and report them appropriately. Leaders follow up these concerns diligently. They provide vulnerable families with timely support. Leaders also work with other agencies to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Leaders make use of the expertise of other professionals, including police community support officers, to deepen pupils' understanding of the risks involved when they are playing and working online. This helps pupils to know how to keep themselves safe when using technology.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The phonics programme is not delivered consistently well by all staff. Some children and pupils do not build up secure phonics knowledge within lessons. This makes it more difficult for them to learn in other aspects of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that all staff are trained to deliver the phonics programme equally well. This is to make sure that all children and pupils benefit from high-quality phonics sessions.
- The newly revised curriculum is at an early stage of implementation in several subjects. In some subjects, curriculum improvements are ongoing. Over time, pupils have not learned and remembered subject knowledge as well as they could in these subjects. Leaders should rapidly finalise these subject curriculums and make sure that teachers are appropriately trained to deliver them well.
- Leaders' approaches to assessment are still being refined. In several subjects, teachers do not use assessment strategies as well as they should to support pupils to remember essential subject knowledge. Leaders should provide teachers with the guidance that they need to plan learning that builds on what pupils know and can do. This is so that pupils can learn consistently well across the curriculum.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Little Sutton C of E Primary School, to be good in February 2013.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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

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| Unique reference number | 145075 |
| Local authority | Cheshire West and Chester |
| Inspection number | 10226062 |
| 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 | 167 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Ian Wilson |
| Executive Principal | Zoe Carciero |
| Website | www.littlesuttonceprimary.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Little Sutton C of E Primary School converted to become an academy school in March 2018. When its predecessor school, Little Sutton C of E Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The executive principal joined the school in January 2020. She is also responsible for another school within the trust.
- This school belongs to the Diocese of Chester. Its last section 48 inspection took place in October 2016.
- The school is governed by a local academy committee. This committee has recently joined with the committee from another school within the trust. A joint local academy committee has been formed. A new chair of governors is now in place.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive principal and other leaders in school. Inspectors spoke with members of the joint local academy committee and representatives from the multi-academy trust. They also spoke with a representative of the Diocese of Chester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and physical education. They spoke with the curriculum leaders of these subjects. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils. Inspectors talked with the curriculum leaders from other areas of the curriculum.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents shared through Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. Inspectors also considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed documentation and spoke to leaders and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at lunchtime. They spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school, including how safe they feel. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils shared through Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Jackie Stillings, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maria McGarry

Ofsted Inspector

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