

Inspection of a good school: Weston Infant Academy

West Street, Weston Coyney, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST3 6PT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 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 enjoy coming to Weston Infant Academy school because they love learning new things. Pupils are kind and welcoming. They feel happy and safe. If they feel worried or sad, they know that adults will help them. Pupils rarely fall out with each other because they want to follow the school's rules.

The principal has a clear and ambitious vision for the school. She has developed passionate and skilled leaders who share this vision.

Pupils play well with each other at breaktimes. All pupils are included in the games. Pupils even checked if the inspector wanted to play hide and seek with them, as she was by herself. Adults ensure pupils have successful playtimes. They play games with the pupils such as bowling, 'hot potato' and skipping. Pupils enjoy this.

Pupils like talking about the books they read and listen to. However, pupils learning to read do not always remember the letter sounds they have been taught. Some teachers do not always plan learning that helps pupils remember these sounds well enough. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and do not read as well as they should.

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

Leaders are passionate about getting pupils to love reading. They have thought carefully about the books they want pupils to know in detail. Teachers read stories from a range of authors. Pupils talk passionately about the stories they like.

Leaders are introducing a new approach to teaching phonics. However, some staff do not make sure that pupils quickly learn to read. At times, the work pupils do when learning

new letter sounds is too easy or too hard. Some teachers do not use assessment well enough to be able to match the work to what the pupils can do. This means that some pupils have gaps in their knowledge of the sounds they should know.

Mathematics is a strength in the school. Leaders have ensured there is a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematics. Resources are used effectively to support pupils' learning. In the early years, teachers are skilled in developing mathematical understanding by asking questions that make children think deeply. Children are skilled at explaining their answers. They are proud of their achievements. One child was so proud of his learning that he took the inspector on a tour of the dinosaur nest the class had built. He confidently counted dinosaurs as he walked.

Leaders have worked hard to develop a curriculum that is exciting for the pupils. The pupils learn about local people such as Emma Bridgewater and the captain of the Titanic, Edward John Smith. Learning is well sequenced and builds on what pupils already know. However, in some subjects, leaders have not yet identified the key learning they want pupils to remember. This means that although pupils can talk confidently about what they are doing, they do not always remember the most important parts of their learning.

Pupils' positive behaviour allows learning to happen. Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They use the resources in the classrooms to support their learning well. In history, for example, pupils used a timeline to support their understanding of chronology.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and effectively. Leaders ensure that pupils with SEND benefit from appropriate support so that they can access the full curriculum alongside their classmates.

Leaders carefully consider ways to enhance pupils' learning. Pupils attend clubs that support both academic and personal development. For example, pupils attend games, writing and science clubs. Pupils enjoy attending these clubs.

Leaders have worked effectively to improve attendance. Families that need help are carefully identified. Staff then work effectively with the school's educational welfare officer to give targeted support. The number of pupils who are regularly absent from school is declining as a result.

Governors and trustees share the principal's ambitious vision for the school. They provide leaders with appropriate challenge, help and encouragement. Leaders benefit from the trust's support.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate leaders' and governors' help in managing their workload. Staff feel their well-being is considered when leaders introduce new initiatives. Leaders have worked hard to build a supportive team across the two schools in the federation.

In discussion with the principal, the inspector agreed that the teaching of early reading and the foundation curriculum may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that all staff know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. They have worked hard to establish effective relationships with parents and carers. Leaders offer support before issues arise. If concerns arise about a pupil, leaders make swift and detailed referrals to the appropriate agencies. This ensures that pupils get the right support when they need it.

Pupils are taught to keep safe online. Pupils feel confident to share any concerns with a trusted adult. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some members of staff do not have the knowledge required to teach phonics and early reading effectively. This prevents some pupils from progressing through the reading curriculum as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that all members of staff have the subject knowledge that they need to deliver the early reading curriculum effectively.
- Some teachers are not using assessment well enough to adapt phonics teaching to meet pupils' needs. This means that some learning is too easy or too hard. Pupils do not secure the knowledge they need to be fluent and confident readers. Leaders need to ensure that staff use assessment information to then plan activities that help pupils to securely remember and confidently use the letter sounds they have been taught.
- In a small number of subjects, leaders have not defined the precise knowledge that they want pupils to learn. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they should. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are in the process of bringing this about. Leaders should ensure that they identify the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn in these subjects.

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, Weston Heights Infant School, to be good in February 2014.

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

Unique reference number	143358
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10212333
Type of school	Infant
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Johnny Anderson
Principal	Julie Birchall
Website	www.westonfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school federated with Weston Junior Academy in September 2015. The schools share the same principal.
- Weston Infant Academy converted to become an academy school and joined St Bart's Multi-Academy Trust in November 2017.
- The school uses a minibus to transport siblings from the infant to the junior school.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school club.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is a separate specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND run by Abbey Hill School and College on the school site.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held meetings with the principal, vice-principal, assistant principal and special educational needs coordinator.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and checked safeguarding documents, including the checks made on staff. They also examined documentation relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- The inspector considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff recorded in Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector spoke with those responsible for governance, local governors and executive leaders from the multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Eve Morris, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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