

Inspection of a good school: West Didsbury CE Primary School

Central Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, Greater Manchester M20 4ZA

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Outcome

West Didsbury CE Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy their time at this supportive and welcoming school community. They play and learn happily together. Pupils who have joined the school recently said that they made friends easily.

Pupils make every effort to reach the high expectations that leaders have of them. In lessons, pupils work hard and learn with interest and enthusiasm. They are encouraged to develop independence in their approach to learning and take pride in their achievements.

Pupils behave extremely well and treat each other with consideration. Pupils build strong relationships with caring staff. Pupils are encouraged to share any concerns in a number of ways, including by posting a message in the class 'ask-it basket'. They are confident that staff will help them to sort out any problems. Leaders act swiftly to resolve any issues about bullying. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils value the many clubs on offer, such as chess, sports and musical theatre, that appeal to a wide range of interests. Pupils are proud to make a difference by being a member of the ethos council or by raising funds for local charities. They understand the importance of treating everyone with respect.

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

Leaders have designed a broad, ambitious and stimulating curriculum for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

In many subjects, leaders have identified the important knowledge that pupils should learn. This knowledge is ordered carefully from the early years to the end of Year 6, so that new ideas build well on pupils' previous learning. In these subjects, teachers receive valuable guidance and support from subject leaders in the effective delivery of the curriculum. Teachers make use of their strong subject knowledge to explain new learning

clearly. They use assessment strategies to carefully check pupils' understanding and act quickly to address any misconceptions. Pupils achieve well in these subjects.

In a few other subjects, leaders have not identified the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn and remember. Subject leaders have not considered carefully enough the logical order of when the curriculum content should be taught to enable pupils to build their understanding of important concepts over time. Consequently, in these subjects, some misconceptions arise. In addition, teachers lack clarity on how to check what pupils remember and understand from their prior learning.

Leaders have given careful thought to designing a curriculum that provides children in the early years with a strong start. Children are happy in their environment. They enjoy learning and are well prepared for Year 1.

Leaders have ensured that pupils learning to read well is a priority for all. All staff have received training in the new, clearly structured phonics programme, which is taught consistently well from the early years. Teachers skilfully adjust and refine support to ensure that pupils can apply their understanding of phonics with increasing confidence. Leaders keep a close check on pupils' progress in reading and staff provide prompt and effective additional support for any pupils who fall behind. As a result, almost all pupils learn to read fluently and accurately by the end of Year 2.

Older pupils hone their comprehension skills by accessing a rich variety of carefully chosen texts. Pupils are eager to talk about their favourite books and authors. They are motivated to read independently by the plentiful high-quality reading materials provided by leaders. Many pupils enjoy accessing the cosy outdoor reading shed at lunchtimes. Pupils' enjoyment and confidence in reading contribute to their achievement across the whole curriculum.

Leaders ensure that the needs of pupils with SEND are identified early. Staff are well trained in tailoring their teaching approaches, so that pupils with SEND access the same ambitious curriculum as their classmates. Pupils who need additional support are assisted ably by well-trained staff. Many parents and carers of pupils with SEND value the updates that they receive about their children's progress. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils are well mannered, confident and articulate. Pupils are able to listen to their teachers and to focus on their learning as lessons are rarely disrupted.

Leaders provide a range of opportunities for pupils to expand their horizons and learn more about the wider world. Leaders use the school's values to develop pupils' empathy for others and to understand how they can play a positive role in their school and the wider community. For example, older pupils proudly carry out responsibilities as school councillors, ethos leaders and as members of the eco-committee to improve the environment and support of local charities and further afield.

Governors are ambitious for the school. They offer appropriate support and increasing levels of challenge to hold leaders to account for the quality of education for pupils.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate that leaders are approachable and considerate of their workload and well-being. Staff said that they feel like part of a supportive community. This feeling is echoed by parents, most of whom hold the school in high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that staff receive regular training, so that they remain alert to the small signs that might indicate that a pupil is at risk from harm. Staff follow clear procedures to report any concerns, which are followed up promptly by leaders. The safeguarding team access appropriate support for vulnerable pupils and their families.

Pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe when online and in the community. For example, they learn about how to avoid risks near busy roads and how to ride a bicycle safely. Pupils recognise some of the important features of healthy relationships, such as consent.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, leaders have not ensured that staff are clear about the essential knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn and remember. As a result, teachers are unable to check how well pupils have learned the foundations of knowledge before introducing new ideas. Leaders should ensure that teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn, so that staff can check that pupils' prior learning is secure.
- Some subject leaders do not have the curriculum expertise that they need to ensure that the knowledge they expect pupils to learn and remember is progressive and coherent. This causes some pupils to develop misconceptions. Leaders should ensure that subject leaders are equipped to design curriculums that build logically from the Reception Year to the end of Year 6. This will enable them to evaluate what is going well and what needs to improve in the subjects that they lead.

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 June 2018.

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	141967
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10291434
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	410
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Felicity Bradley
Headteacher	Hannah Large
Website	www.westdidsburyceprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the St James and Emmanuel Academy Trust.
- The school is part of the diocese of Manchester. The school's last section 48 inspection for schools with a religious character took place in November 2018.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been several changes to governing body membership, including a new chair of governors.
- School leaders do not currently make use of alternative provision for any pupils.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher and other leaders. She spoke with subject leaders and other members of staff.

- The inspector spoke with three trustees, including the chair of the trust and the chief executive officer of the trust. She also spoke with four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke to representatives of both the local authority and the diocese of Manchester. She also spoke to the school improvement partner.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour around the school, at lunchtime and in lessons. She spoke with pupils to discuss their views of the school, their learning, their behaviour and safety.
- The inspector checked the arrangements for keeping children safe. She reviewed documentation, including records and information about attendance, behaviour and bullying.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed some pupils reading to a familiar adult. She also reviewed several other aspects of the school's curriculum.
- The inspector met with leaders who have responsibility for the provision for pupils with SEND and reviewed samples of documentation relating to SEND.
- The inspector considered the views of parents, shared through Ofsted Parent View. This included the free-text comments and other written communication received from parents. The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspector considered a range of documents shared by school leaders, including the school improvement plan and the minutes taken at governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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