

Inspection of Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School

School Lane, Astbury, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 4RG

Inspection dates: 7 and 8 March 2023

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to come to Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School. They said that they enjoy learning. Staff welcome pupils warmly into school every day. Pupils and staff have positive relationships. Pupils said this helps them feel happy, well cared for and safe.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. Pupils try hard to live up to these standards. Pupils behave well around school and work hard in lessons. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well.

Everyone knows each other. Older and younger pupils play alongside each other happily in the play areas. Pupils know that there is always someone that they can talk to. Any fallouts or incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively by leaders.

Pupils enjoy taking on roles and responsibilities such as head boy, head girl and team captains. The school council, safety council and ethos council all make positive contributions to school life. For example, the safety council leads assemblies about road safety.

Pupils take advantage of the variety of enrichment activities that are on offer. They like attending after-school clubs like 'outdoor explorers' and 'awesome authors'. Pupils enjoy their role in community events like the May Day celebrations.

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

Leaders, with the support of governors and trustees, have worked hard to improve the curriculum. Leaders ensure that pupils study a broad and balanced range of subjects.

The curriculum is ambitious and well thought out from the early years to Year 6. For instance, the early years curriculum places a strong emphasis on early language and communication. Added to this, a focus on local history runs through the curriculum from the early years to Year 6. This helps to make the curriculum meaningful for pupils.

In most subjects, leaders have identified the knowledge that they want pupils to know and the order in which content should be delivered. This helps pupils to build logically on what they know already and prepares them well for their next stage of education. However, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not made what pupils should learn as clear to teachers. Added to this, some teachers lack clarity on the order in which some of this content should be delivered. This means that some teachers are not sure about what to teach and when learning should happen.

For the most part, teachers design learning well and choose appropriate activities for pupils. For example, a group of children in the early years playing ten-pin bowling were encouraged to record their scores. This provided opportunities for children to practise their writing and adding numbers to 10. That said, in a small number of subjects, leaders have not ensured that teachers can deliver some aspects of subject curriculums with confidence.

Staff are well trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively. They check on pupils' phonics knowledge regularly so that they can identify pupils who are finding it difficult to learn to read. These pupils receive extra support to help them to catch up. Staff ensure that pupils' reading books are closely matched to the sounds that they know. By the time pupils reach Year 6, pupils can read fluently and accurately with confidence. They enjoy reading and they like being read to.

Leaders identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Teachers think carefully about how to meet their needs so that these pupils can progress well through the curriculum.

From their first days in the early years, children learn the importance of behaving well and working hard. They learn how to share and how to take turns. Pupils across the school show high levels of respect towards each other and to staff. Any disruption to learning is rare.

Pupils know the importance of keeping themselves healthy. For example, they enjoy using the school's running track to exercise regularly, eager to better their previous performance. Pupils enjoy mental health sessions which help them understand how the brain works and how to manage their feelings and behaviours.

Staff said that they are proud to work at the school. They are unanimous in their appreciation of leaders' support for their well-being. Staff said that leaders are mindful of their workload.

Governors are dedicated to providing a high-quality education for all pupils. They understand their roles and carry them out well. They appreciate the support, training and guidance that is provided by the trust.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and trustees have created a strong culture of keeping pupils safe. They make sure that all staff have received appropriate training and that all staff know that pupils' safety is a priority. Staff are vigilant. They know how to report any concerns that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders' systems and procedures are rigorous.

Staff know families, especially the most vulnerable, well. This helps them to identify any concerns early and raise these with the designated safeguarding leader. Leaders work well with external partners to get families the help and support that they need.

Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, leaders are not clear enough about the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This means that teachers are not sure about exactly what to teach and when. This leads to gaps in some pupils' knowledge over time. Leaders should make sure that, in these subjects, teachers are aware of the essential knowledge that pupils should acquire and when this learning should be delivered.
- In some subjects, subject leaders' work to check on the impact of the curriculums is at an early stage. This means that these subject leaders have not ensured that some teachers can deliver aspects of subject curriculums with confidence. Leaders should ensure that, in these subjects, staff receive the support that they need to help pupils to build up their knowledge securely over time.

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	145720
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10267791
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kathryn Moore
Headteacher	Philippa Blythe
Website	www.astburyschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in February 2019. When its predecessor school, Astbury St Mary's CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of the Chester Diocesan Academy Trust.
- Leaders do not use alternative provision.
- The school is a Church of England primary school. The predecessor school received its most recent section 48 inspection in December 2016.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their work and school life. They spoke with members of the governing body, the chief executive officer from the academy

trust, the diocese, the headteacher, senior leaders and members of staff. They also met with parents and carers in the playground before school.

- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including information about safeguarding and checks undertaken on newly appointed staff. Inspectors also spoke to staff about safeguarding and about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View and responses to Ofsted's surveys of school staff and pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school, in class, in the dining hall and in the outdoor play areas.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, met with teachers and spoke with pupils. They also met with the subject leader for science. The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.

Inspection team

Craig Richardson, lead inspector Ofsted Inspector

Deborah Bailey Ofsted Inspector

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