

Inspection of Withington Primary School

Lock Road, Withington, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 3QE

Inspection dates: 18 and 19 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Previous inspection grade	Good
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils come into school each day full of curiosity and excitement about what they are going to learn. They enjoy thinking hard in lessons and learning about new things. Leaders expect all pupils to achieve well. They make sure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), get the support they need. As a result, pupils succeed.

Leaders know all pupils and their families well. Pupils, parents and staff all describe Withington Primary School as a family. This can be seen after school, when children of all ages play together in the school's wilderness garden while parents and school staff talk to each other. Like a family, pupils say that they sometimes fall out with each other. They know it is their responsibility to put this right and that their teachers will help them do this.

Pupils' learning is enriched by well-chosen trips and visits. This year, pupils have visited a castle, a planetarium, a chocolate factory and a folk history museum to bring to life what they are learning. Leaders make sure that all pupils can go on two residential visits during their time in school. They say this helps pupils to develop independence and resilience as well as to enjoy new experiences.

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

Leaders have put in place a well-considered curriculum. They have thought carefully about what pupils should know and when they should learn it. This is particularly important as pupils are in mixed-age classes. Where the curriculum is well-established, such as in mathematics, teachers implement the curriculum well and pupils confidently learn new knowledge. However, in some subjects the curriculum is new and leaders have not made sure that teachers have a secure understanding of how the curriculum builds over time. This means that what pupils learn does not always prepare them well enough for what they will learn next.

In the early years, children participate in a range of well-chosen activities to consolidate their learning. Children enjoy making puppets, finding bugs, writing, constructing, painting and identifying animals in a story. They have lots of opportunities to learn and use new words.

Leaders prioritise reading. In Nursery, staff read plenty of stories to the children and children sing rhymes and songs to make sure they are ready to learn to read. From Reception, children are taught to read using an appropriate phonics curriculum. Children are given books to match the sounds they are learning. However, the phonics scheme is not delivered consistently well. Children do not always learn how to say the sounds they are learning clearly enough and teachers do not always model decoding strategies well enough. This means that some children do not learn to read as quickly as they could. Children who are falling behind continue to be introduced to new sounds and this stops them from securing their reading

knowledge. Older pupils enjoy reading for pleasure and are eager to discuss what they are reading.

Pupils with SEND have their needs identified quickly. Leaders make sure that pupils get the right help. Additional adults support pupils very well. Many children join school with speech and language difficulties. Leaders work hard to address these. Early years is a communication-rich environment. Children have lots of opportunities to speak and to play with other children in ways that help them to develop their language skills.

In lessons, pupils are engaged and eager to learn. In the early years, children learn rules and routines. They line up quickly for play time, sit on the carpet at snack time and listen to stories attentively. Throughout the school, teachers make sure that pupils know how to manage their own behaviour. Pupils learn to recognise their feelings and to talk about things that trouble them. Older pupils look out for younger children and make sure that they are doing well. This makes the school a safe and friendly place for all pupils.

Leaders are relentless in finding ways to enhance pupils' experiences beyond the classroom. Alongside the extensive range of after-school clubs on offer, pupils participate in cricket coaching, attend literary festivals, take part in musical performances and go on trips to the theatre. Leaders make sure that all pupils can develop their talents and interests.

The head of school joined the school in September 2022. She quickly identified areas that needed improving and made changes to the curriculum and to processes for managing behaviour. However, leaders do not always monitor the right things and so some areas of the school's work are not improving as quickly as they could. Some priorities, set by the federation, do not reflect the improvements that the school needs to make. Governors discharge their responsibilities carefully. They understand their roles well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding leaders are knowledgeable and experienced. They train staff well and staff report any concerns that they may have about pupils. Leaders act on these concerns promptly and work well with families as well as outside agencies to make sure that pupils receive the help that they need. Leaders make sure that they have strong relationships with families. This means that leaders can often provide support quickly.

Pupils are taught to keep safe. They know about risks they may face in the community and online. All staff are recruited safely.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The phonics curriculum is not implemented consistently well. Pupils do not learn pure sounds and do not learn to use decoding techniques consistently. In addition, some pupils move on to learn new sounds before they have mastered the sounds they have already been taught. This prevents some pupils from learning to read fluently as quickly as they might. Leaders should make sure that all staff have the expertise to deliver the phonics curriculum consistently and effectively.
- Leaders have not made sure that all teachers have a thorough understanding of the how the curriculum builds over time in the foundation subjects. This means that teachers are not able to design the sequences of learning that allow pupils to build on their prior knowledge. Leaders should make sure that all teachers understand how the important knowledge is sequenced in the curriculum so that pupils can build on this learning over time.
- Leaders do not monitor the right things thoroughly enough. This means that they do not spot the things that are not working well quickly enough and so do not put in place appropriate actions to improve their work. Leaders should make sure that their monitoring gives them an accurate understanding of the work of the school so that their actions are focused precisely on the areas that need improving.

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	116748
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	10285041
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing	Rachel Rice
Headteacher	Simon Robertson (Executive headteacher)
Website	www.withington.hereford.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Withington Primary School is a smaller than average school. It operates four mixed-age classes.
- The school is part of a federation with a high school and another primary school.
- There is one governing body for the federated schools.
- The school has nursery provision for three and four year olds.
- The school operates a breakfast club.
- The head of school, who leads the two primary schools in the federation, joined in September 2022.

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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken it into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held discussions with the executive headteacher, head of school and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors held discussions with teachers and representatives of governors.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early 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.
- Inspectors looked at curriculum planning and pupils' books in a range of subjects across the curriculum.
- Inspectors visited the early years provision (Hedgehog class).
- Inspectors met with members of staff individually and in groups and spoke to pupils at various points during the inspection.
- Inspectors took account of responses to staff surveys and responses to Ofsted Parent View. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors looked at records relating to behaviour, bullying, attendance, and safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding arrangements by checking the school's approach to staff recruitment, scrutinising policy documents and meeting with the designated safeguarding lead.

Inspection team

Claire Price, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Stuart Clarkson

His Majesty's Inspector

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