Inspection of a good school: Westoning Lower School

High Street, Westoning, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK45 5JH

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 June 2024

Outcome

Westoning Lower School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Jacqueline Boyle. This school is part of The Pyramid Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Steve Kelly, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Owen Flack.

What is it like to attend this school?

Westoning is a happy and safe place, where pupils flourish. Pupils are keen to learn as soon as they arrive each day. They appreciate the stimulating activities adults plan for them. For example, an Italian themed lunch, to inspire pupils to write a travel brochure on Sicily. These activities motivate pupils to work hard and rise to the adults' high expectations.

Strong routines are established from the moment children join the school in Nursery. These help pupils to learn the school's high standards of behaviour in their work and play. Pupils focus on a different value each half term, for example, appreciation. They try to act out the values in their day to day lives. Pupils are kind and caring in their relationships with each other. They have a sense of belonging. A positive family ethos permeates the school.

Pupils are encouraged to be healthy and active. They are proud of their school's sporting successes. Some pupils develop leadership skills, by becoming school ambassadors. They meet weekly and consider ways to improve their school. Trips take pupils' learning beyond the school gates. On a residential trip, older pupils learn to try new things. They develop important skills for the future such as courage, resilience and co-operation.

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

The school, with support from the trust, has developed an ambitious curriculum. It is carefully planned and clearly sequenced, so that teachers know what to teach and when to teach it. This helps pupils to build knowledge gradually over time. Most pupils achieve well, particularly in reading.

Teachers deliver the curriculum confidently. They design learning activities that make links between past and present learning, and connections between subjects. In the Reception Year, for example, children learn about repeating patterns in maths. In an art activity, they create patterns in their paintings of the animals they had observed on a recent trip to a wildlife park. This helps children to secure their learning.

Teachers recap previous learning at the start of each lesson. This helps pupils to secure their knowledge. Teachers make regular checks on pupils' understanding during lessons. They use these checks to identify gaps in pupils' learning. Teachers give pupils verbal or written feedback on how they can improve. However, when this feedback is written, pupils do not always act on it. This means that errors and misconceptions are sometimes left unaddressed and pupils' progress is slowed.

Pupils are encouraged to develop a love of reading as soon as they join the school. They are enthused about books by the high-quality stories their teachers read to them. Pupils read widely and often. In the early years, high-quality phonics teaching ensures children learn the sounds they need to start reading. Phonics sessions continue through key stage 1 and most pupils can read fluently by the end of Year 2. Staff identify any pupils at risk of falling behind. They put additional support in place for these pupils to help them keep up or catch up. However, there are inconsistencies in the teaching of early reading. The support given to some pupils in the early stages of learning to read is not always sharply focused on their precise needs. This means that some pupils do not progress as quickly as they might.

The school's system for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. These pupils have clear learning plans that set out achievable targets. The school provides advice and training for staff on how best to support pupils with SEND. As a result, pupils with SEND progress well.

Behaviour around the school is typically very good. In the early years, children learn to take turns, share resources and follow instructions. In lessons throughout the school, pupils listen well to their teachers and to each other. The school promotes positive attendance and most pupils attend well. The school is working hard to improve the attendance and punctuality of a small number of pupils.

The school offers pupils a range of wider opportunities. Extra-curricular clubs enable them to develop new or existing skills and talents, particularly in sporting activities. Pupils learn to care about the wider world. They fundraise for a local hospice, for example. They learn tolerance and respect, through the school's values programme. Pupils are accepting of difference, in all its forms.

Governors, trustees and trust leaders have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. They hold school leaders to account against these. Staff appreciate the networking and training opportunities offered by the trust. They value the way leaders consider their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There are inconsistencies in the delivery of the early reading curriculum. As a result, some pupils' progress is not as rapid as it might be. The school should ensure that all staff working with pupils in the early stages of learning to read are supported to deliver the school's chosen approach to phonics as effectively as possible.
- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils act on the feedback they are given. This means that some errors or misconceptions are not addressed and some pupils do not progress as well as they might. The school should ensure that teachers consistently support pupils to make the necessary improvements to their work so that they learn as well as the school intends.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Westoning Lower School, to be good in July 2015.

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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the definition of children in need of help and protection; pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's pupil premium funding (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147994
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10345533
Type of school	First
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Owen Slack
Headteacher	Jacqueline Boyle
Website	www.westoning.org
Date(s) of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Westoning Lower School converted to become an academy in June 2020. When its predecessor school, Westoning Lower School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- There is a breakfast club, run and managed by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with a range of leaders, including the headteacher (who is also the special educational needs coordinator), CEO, director of school improvement, and governors, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and spoke with some pupils about their learning. The inspector looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. She also looked at samples of pupils' work in other subject areas.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school development plan and minutes of trustee and governing body meetings.
- The inspector reviewed the responses to Ofsted's parent survey, Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire. She also spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

Caroline Crozier, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector

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