

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Waterhouses CofE Primary Academy

Waterfall Lane, Waterhouses, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST10 3HY

Inspection date:

17 June 2025

Outcome

Waterhouses CofE Primary Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Rachel Linton. This school is part of QEGSMAT multi-academy 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), Mark Mallender, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Susan Hall.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive happily at this welcoming school each morning. This enjoyment continues all day. Pupils benefit from the caring relationships that they have with staff and each other. Pupils feel safe. They know there is support around them when they need it.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievements and conduct. Pupils live up to these expectations and achieve well. This starts in the early years, where children get off to a flying start.

Pupils of all ages have positive attitudes to learning. They try hard and celebrate each other's achievements. Pupils enjoy learning outside in the spacious and well-maintained outdoor spaces. The playground is a harmonious and friendly place where pupils look after each other. All pupils swim each week in the school's pool.

Pupils appreciate the opportunities that the school provides to broaden their experiences. They take part in sporting competitions, visit different places of worship and travel to London to see Parliament at work. Older pupils develop confidence on residential trips where they experience abseiling and archery. All pupils are expected to be responsible and help around the school whether this is tidying up in early years or taking on roles such as worship leaders or school councillors.

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

The school has realised its clear vision for providing high-quality education for all pupils. The curriculum reflects the needs of mixed-age classes and is ambitious. It sets out clearly what pupils should learn and when. Pupils build their knowledge gradually and typically, each stage of learning prepares pupils well for the next one. However, on occasions pupils' work is not sufficiently adapted to ensure it deepens pupils' learning. This means that sometimes pupils do not learn as well as they could.

The school ensures that teachers have secure subject knowledge. Skilled staff regularly check pupils' understanding of the curriculum, which provides them with clear information about how well pupils are learning. Pupils develop detailed knowledge and demonstrate this when talking about their work. For example, pupils use geographical vocabulary to accurately talk about biomes, rivers and oxbow lakes. However, there is a lack of consistency in the school's expectations of how written work is checked. Errors with key vocabulary spelling, basic grammar and handwriting are inconsistently addressed. As a result, some pupils repeat mistakes and do not embed the knowledge and skills they need to become fluent writers.

Reading is at the heart of the curriculum. A love of reading starts successfully in Nursery where children enjoy carefully chosen rhymes, stories and songs. Staff teach phonics and early reading effectively. They make regular checks on pupils' progress through the reading curriculum. Any pupils who fall behind receive the additional support they need. Pupils learn to read well and become confident, fluent readers.

The school recognises the importance of pupils attending school regularly. They are proud that very few pupils regularly miss school. Pupils behave well in the classrooms. They agree that teachers deal with rare misbehaviour fairly and effectively. Their learning is not disrupted by the behaviour of others.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are swiftly identified. The school works closely with external professionals where needed to gain a clear understanding of each pupil's needs. The school uses this information to ensure that pupils receive effective support. This means pupils with SEND achieve well and learn successfully.

The school provides an engaging extra-curricular programme. This offers all pupils a range of experiences to develop their character. Pupils have opportunities to develop a sense of awe and wonder in the natural world through outdoor learning and events such as spirituality day. Pupils' opinions are valued and they feel listened to. For example, they shared their concerns about pollution during an assembly. The school responded by inviting local ecological groups in to speak to pupils. This resulted in the school increasing its recycling activity and environmental awareness. Pupils are curious about the wider world and enjoy learning about others from different faiths and backgrounds. They understand fundamental British values and appreciate the importance of equality. As a result, pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the school and they make decisions in the best interests of pupils. The trust encourages and supports staff development. This contributes to the positive team spirit at the school. Everyone works well together to make sure that changes impact positively on pupils. Staff feel valued and morale is high. Despite having many roles to fulfil in a small school, staff feel well supported with their workload and are proud to work here.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, the curriculum is not adapted sufficiently well enough to support pupils who are ready to move on to more complex activities. As a result, some pupils are not given enough opportunities to deepen their learning. The school should develop opportunities in the curriculum for pupils to undertake learning activities that meet their needs and deepen their understanding.
- The school does not have consistently high enough expectations of pupils' writing across the curriculum. This means some pupils make repeated mistakes with spelling, letter formation and grammar and this hinders their ability to become fluent writers. The school should ensure that expectations for writing are clearly understood and that mistakes are consistently addressed by staff so pupils can express, in writing, their knowledge and ideas fluently.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the

last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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, Waterhouses CofE (VC) Primary School, to be good for overall effectiveness in December 2013.

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	143622
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10371393
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Susan Hall
CEO of the trust	Mark Mallender
Headteacher	Rachel Linton
Website	www.waterhouses.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England Academy and is part of the Diocese of Lichfield. The school's last section 48 inspection was in May 2025.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.
- This is a small school. Some classes comprise pupils from mixed-year groups. Staffordshire local authority has a mixture of primary, first and middle schools. As a result, when pupils finish Year 4 in this school, some parents choose to send their pupils to another middle school when they start Year 5. This accounts for the very small number of pupils taking national tests at the end of Year 6.
- The school runs before- and after-school provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation of the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 that into account in the evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors 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 inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, who is also the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator. Inspectors also spoke to subject leaders.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and representatives of the local governing body. She also spoke with a representative of the diocese and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined a range of school documentation, including leaders' self-evaluation, improvement plans, records of governance and documentation relating to attendance.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents and carers shared through Ofsted Parent View, including any free-text comments. An inspector also spoke with some parents at the start of the inspection.
- The inspectors considered the views of staff through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection, as well as the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views throughout the inspection, including through classroom visits, group discussions and informal conversations at social times.

Inspection team

Corinne Biddell, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Ray

Ofsted Inspector

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