

Inspection of a good school: Charles Darwin Community Primary School

Darwin Street, Castle, Northwich, Cheshire CW8 1BN

Inspection dates:

29 and 30 June 2021

Outcome

Charles Darwin Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are proud to belong to this happy and nurturing school community. They get on well together and make friends easily. Pupils told inspectors that adults in school are kind and caring. Pupils feel safe in school. They know that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Bullying happens rarely. When it does, staff quickly sort it out. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well because teachers have high expectations of them.

Pupils enjoy an interesting and exciting curriculum. They spoke enthusiastically about the project that they had completed about Charles Darwin's expedition to South America and the Galapagos Islands. Pupils attend many clubs after school, such as netball, drama and the popular STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) club.

Pupils take on responsibilities which help them to develop their confidence. Older pupils enjoy their roles as 'e-cadets', helping other pupils to stay safe online. Pupils learn about different cultures and faiths. They told inspectors that everyone is welcome at the school, regardless of their race, gender or beliefs.

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

Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is suitably broad and ambitious for pupils, including for those pupils with SEND. They have planned out carefully the topics that pupils, including children in the early years, should learn during their time at primary school. Well-trained subject leaders check on how well pupils are learning across the curriculum. However, in some subjects, leaders have not identified precisely the essential knowledge that they want pupils to know and remember. At times, this hampers teachers when designing learning that builds well on what pupils already know.

Classrooms are calm and happy places to learn. Pupils enjoy the interesting work that teachers plan for them. In most subjects, teachers help pupils to make connections in their learning, so that they can tackle new ideas with confidence. For example, pupils use their knowledge of geography when learning about Amelia Earhart's journey from Hawaii to California during their history lessons. Older pupils explained to inspectors how their understanding of multiplication and division in mathematics helps them to calculate fractions of an amount. By the end of Year 6, pupils gain a strong grounding in a range of subjects. They are well prepared to make a strong start at secondary school.

Leaders make sure that pupils have many opportunities to read. Teachers read to pupils regularly and the teachers' choice of books encourages pupils to read independently. Children start to learn phonics as soon as they begin in the Reception Class. Teachers and teaching assistants have suitable and regular training. Staff check on pupils' reading often and organise extra support and practice for those pupils who need it, including for those pupils with SEND. That said, very occasionally, the books that adults select for some pupils do not match their phonics knowledge precisely. This causes these pupils to lose confidence and prevents them from practising the sounds that they know. Older pupils are enthusiastic about reading. They know how important reading is to their success in life. They read widely and often, both in school and at home.

Leaders have adapted their approach so that pupils, including children in the Reception Class, continue to have a wide range of opportunities that enrich their learning. For example, as part of their project on Charles Darwin, pupils met online with scientists based on the Galapagos Islands. The many after-school clubs on offer for pupils are well attended.

Pupils learn about different cultures and faiths. They understand the importance of respect for all. They demonstrate this with considerate behaviour and positive attitudes to their learning.

Governors have offered strong support to school leaders over the course of the pandemic. For example, they have linked up with subject leaders so that they can keep up to date with curriculum improvements. This has ensured that they are well informed about school life.

Leaders strive to provide families with the support they need, for example by delivering parenting classes and specialist support for those pupils with speech and language difficulties. Leaders have also worked to increase awareness of the importance of good mental health for the whole community. Staff morale is high. They appreciate that their well-being and workload is of high importance to leaders and governors.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that safeguarding is everyone's priority. Staff receive regular training to help them to spot concerns. They are clear on the procedures that they should

follow to protect pupils who may be at risk. Leaders engage well with other agencies to provide additional support for vulnerable pupils and their families when needed.

Leaders plan opportunities for pupils to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, police community support officers deliver workshops at the school regularly. This helps pupils to know how to keep themselves safe online and in the local community

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified precisely the essential knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This hampers teachers' ability to plan learning that builds on what pupils already know and can do. Leaders should ensure that they identify precisely the essential knowledge that they want pupils, including children in the early years, to learn.
- Very occasionally, some pupils do not read books that are matched well to the sounds that they know. This inhibits these pupils from becoming confident and fluent readers. Leaders should ensure that those pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read benefit from reading books that are matched precisely to their phonics knowledge so that pupils can develop their reading fluency through practice.

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. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 16 March 2011.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school [here](#).

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	111053
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10194637
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	346
Appropriate authority	Local authority Cheshire West and Chester
Chair of governing body	Gail Maguire
Headteacher	Adam Croft
Website	www.charlesdarwin.cheshire.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	2 March 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and other staff.
- The lead inspector met virtually with the deputy headteacher and four members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors visited lessons and spoke with pupils. Inspectors listened to children and pupils read from the Reception Class, Years 1, 2 and 3.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school, on the playground and in lessons.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day.

- Inspectors held discussions with staff and examined a range of documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors reviewed other documentation provided by the school including attendance information, the single central record of safeguarding checks, leaders' plan for improvement and their self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and history. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors considered the 76 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and reviewed the free-text comments from parents. Inspectors also considered 35 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and five responses to Ofsted's questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Janette Walker, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sheila Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector

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