

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Acorns Primary and Nursery School

Pooltown Road, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire CH65 7ED

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 June 2025

Outcome

The Acorns Primary and Nursery School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Hannah Broom. This school is part of The Rowan Learning 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), Phil Rimmer, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Wilson.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and proud to be part of the Acorns 'family'. They are polite and respectful towards each other, staff and visitors. They rise to meet the high expectations that staff set for them. Pupils take on responsibilities, such as mentors and house captains. In performing these roles, pupils develop their communication and leadership skills. The school is a haven for pupils, where they are listened to and appreciated.

The school has high aspirations for pupils' achievement. Pupils and staff share and demonstrate the school's mission to 'be the best you can be'. Pupils enjoy their learning, and they are keen to share what they know and can do. They experience trips to a capital city or to the beach. Pupils develop a rich vocabulary which they use to good effect in their writing. They take pride in the work that they produce, and they recognise the importance of trying their best. As a result, pupils typically achieve well.

There are many opportunities for pupils to broaden their horizons. Pupils perform locally and further afield, showcasing their talents in dance, music and sport. They take part in competitive sporting tournaments with other local schools. Pupils of all ages engage with others in the local community. One such example is a project where pupils and older people spend time together sharing stories, crafts and songs.

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

The school has adopted a high-quality curriculum that provides well for the large proportion of disadvantaged pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school identifies pupils' additional needs swiftly. Effective support helps these pupils to successfully follow the curriculum alongside their peers.

The school has a strong focus on supporting children's communication and language skills in the early years. As soon as two-year-old children start, they are helped to settle quickly into the school's well-established routines. Staff's relationships with children are warm and nurturing. This supports children to become confident learners who play and interact well together. They get off to a flying start to their early education.

Staff deliver the phonics programme well to build on these strong foundations. Pupils who require additional support get the help they need to read well. Most pupils become accurate and fluent readers in readiness for key stage 2. Older pupils have equally positive attitudes towards reading. They enjoy listening to their teachers read exciting texts. Pupils speak with joy about how reading takes them to places they could only imagine.

In 2024, Year 6 pupils did not attain as well as they could have in the national mathematics test. This is because the school did not accurately address the gaps which existed for that cohort of pupils following the COVID-19 pandemic. The school has been proactive in addressing this issue. They have introduced checks on pupils' learning which now ensure that any gaps are known and rectified in a swift manner. As a result, pupils' learning in mathematics is now secure.

Pupils experience a well-ordered curriculum that details the important knowledge that they should learn. Typically, staff deliver lessons that engage and enthuse pupils to learn more. Pupils speak with understanding about different artists and become confident, fluent mathematicians. Nonetheless, in some subjects, the learning activities that staff choose are not well selected to deliver the intended curriculum content. At times, this does not support pupils to learn as well as they could.

Pupils attend school regularly. The school has taken effective action to reduce pupils' levels of absence. Pupils enjoy coming to school. They say it is their safe place. Pupils are considerate of others. Classrooms are orderly and calm, which helps pupils to focus and concentrate on their learning.

The school provides well for pupils' wider development. Its programme 'Acorns to Oak Trees' is purposeful and carefully designed. Extensive experiences are afforded to pupils, from taking a ride on a train to learning how to cycle. Equally, there are simple pleasures in life added to the offer, such as appreciating a sunset and enjoying a campfire with friends. School visitors showcase different job opportunities and share the skills and personal qualities that can lead to future success. This helps to raise pupils' aspirations and prepares them well for the next stage of their life journey.

The local governing body and the trust have a shared ambition to provide the best possible education for pupils. Governors and trustees are well informed and highly knowledgeable. They offer robust support and challenge to the school. The school and trust engage effectively with staff. They ensure that staff receive the dedicated time and development that they need to fulfil their roles well. All are extremely positive about being a part of the Acorns Primary and Nursery School.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve? (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, staff do not choose the most appropriate learning activities to deliver the intended curriculum content. Some of the important knowledge that pupils should learn is overlooked, meaning that they do not learn as well as they could. The school should ensure staff select suitable activities, to enable pupils to know and remember more.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, The Acorns Primary and Nursery School, to be good for overall effectiveness in February 2018.

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	149092
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10348398
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	368
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Wilson
CEO of the trust	Phil Rimmer
Executive Headteacher	Hannah Broom
Website	www.theacornsprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The Acorns Primary and Nursery School, converted to become an academy in July 2022. When its predecessor school, The Acorns Primary and Nursery School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good for overall effectiveness.
- The executive headteacher and local governing body share oversight of both The Acorns Primary and Nursery School and Whitley Primary School.
- The school provides nursery provision for two-year-old children.
- The school provides a before- and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector listened to some pupils read from Year 1 to Year 3.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other school leaders and members of staff.
- The inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, trustees and trust staff. She also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 documents, including records of governing body meetings, the school's evaluation of its strengths and areas for improvement and documents related to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school and observed their behaviour at lunchtime. She took account of Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She considered the views of staff shared through Ofsted's online survey.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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