

Inspection of Bitterley CofE Primary School (Aided)

Bitterley, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 3HF

Inspection dates: 24 and 25 October 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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The head of school is Mrs Jill France. This school is part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Canon Andrew Teale, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mr William Finn. There is also an executive headteacher, Mrs Kerrie Lewis, who is responsible for this school and two others.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and enjoy school. They appreciate the opportunities they have to take on responsibilities. These include sports leaders, a pupil safety committee and the worship crew. Pupils have meetings, make decisions and create action plans to help make life at school even better.

Pupils are particularly proud of their school grounds. The school council has made plans to improve activities at lunchtime and playtimes, including turning the old early years outdoor area into an outside classroom for reading and board games.

The school has clear routines in place to keep pupils safe. Pupils know that they can speak to any adult if they have concerns. They can also spend time with one of the school dogs if they are having difficulties. As a result, pupils feel safe and cared for in school. They feel fully included in everything the school does.

There have been many changes at the school recently. Pupils have helped to improve the behaviour policy and say that behaviour has improved. They understand the need to treat everyone with care and respect. They say that if bullying happens, they know that an adult will deal with it for them.

There have been changes to the way that the curriculum is organised. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. Their improved attitudes to learning have led to improved outcomes in English and mathematics. There are high expectations for all pupils, and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported well.

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

In reading, children in Reception learn new sounds and practise ones they have already learned. They then have the opportunity to practise writing the letters that make those sounds. Everyone joins in, and children enjoy the speedy recall of sounds, treating it like a game. Extra support is given if children need help to keep up. The effective teaching of reading and phonics continues into key stage 1. Regular checks tell those with responsibility for phonics and reading how well pupils are doing. The dedicated focus on improving pupils' reading has led to significant improvements. However, not all subjects benefit from the same level of monitoring. This means that some subjects are not improving as quickly as they might.

The school has also focused on developing the mathematics curriculum. Other subjects have also been reviewed and are being improved, but not all of the reviews are complete. There is clear curriculum planning in place for each subject, but in some subjects, the key knowledge and skills are not always specifically identified or well sequenced. Where subjects are well established, teachers have a clear understanding of what to teach and when. Pupils achieve well in these subjects.

Staff identify any concerns about pupils' learning, and pupils with SEND are quickly identified. Additional adults help support these pupils and special resources are provided when needed. However, on some occasions, work is not adapted precisely enough for pupils to be able to fully access the same tasks as their classmates. Generally, pupils with SEND are achieving well and parents report that they are pleased with their progress.

Pupils are polite. They respond well to the school's high expectations for behaviour. There is no disruption to lessons. Pupils play together happily at breaktimes. The sports leaders help to run games and activities each lunchtime. Pupils share equipment and take turns. Most pupils attend school regularly and attendance has risen. If leaders identify that a pupil's attendance is dropping, staff are quick to speak to parents to encourage pupils to attend school regularly.

The school offers a range of opportunities for pupils to take on roles of leadership and responsibility to prepare for life as active citizens. For example, children in Reception choose which books should be read to the class, and older pupils vote for their school councillors. Pupils know the school values, which are integrated into the reward systems in school. These contribute strongly to the personal development of pupils.

There have been significant staffing changes at the school, as well as changes to how the school is organised and run. Parents are positive about these improvements. The trust has provided significant support to the school, which has been instrumental in driving forward improvements at a rapid pace. Through working with other schools in the trust, teachers at Bitterley have been able to develop their practice very well. Staff are positive about their roles, and the school takes care to consider their workload and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is in the process of revising the curriculum for some subjects. As a result, the specific knowledge and skills that pupils need to know and remember in these subjects is not yet precisely identified or sequenced. The school should ensure that the precise knowledge and skills are identified and sequenced in a logical order in all subjects to enable pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.
- In some subjects, leaders have a clear understanding of the standards that pupils are reaching, what is working well and what still needs to be improved. However, other subjects are not checked as effectively, so this information is not as detailed across the wider curriculum. The school should fully establish detailed monitoring across all subjects so there is a clear understanding of how well pupils are

achieving and what further improvements could be made to the curriculum in all subjects.

- On occasion, pupils with SEND do not have work adapted precisely enough to enable them to fully access the learning. When this happens, they do not achieve as well as they might. Leaders should ensure that all learning is appropriately matched to the needs of pupils with SEND to enable them to fully access the learning and achieve highly across the curriculum.

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	142142
Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	10290623
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	97
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	William Finn
Headteacher	Jill France (head of school) Kerrie Lewis (executive headteacher)
Website	www.bitterleyschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has undergone significant leadership and staffing changes since the last inspection. Both the executive headteacher and the head of school have been appointed to their posts recently. There have also been a number of changes to teaching and support staff.
- The school is part of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust.
- The school accepts 2-year-olds into its nursery.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors met with the executive headteacher and head of school. They met with the academy improvement partner, subject leaders and directors of the Diocese of Hereford Multi Academy Trust.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult and discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspectors considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and records of trust meetings.
- Inspectors looked at records of attendance and behaviour. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school and talked to them informally about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- Inspectors met with the designated safeguarding leader, examined school records and discussed safeguarding cases and training. To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding 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.
- Inspectors spoke to parents and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They also gathered the views of staff and pupils through discussion.

Inspection team

Anne Potter, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Pete Hines OBE

Ofsted Inspector

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