

Inspection of Weare Academy First School

Notting Hill Way, Weare, Axbridge, Somerset BS26 2JS

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Ofsted has not previously inspected Weare Academy First School as an academy school under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Children and pupils thrive at this Nursery and school. Pupils are proud of their school and take pride in wearing their uniforms. Parents comment how their children are 'excited to go to school every day'. Relationships are a strength. Staff create an atmosphere which is calm and productive.

Leaders have high expectations of what each pupil can achieve, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy their learning across a range of subjects.

Adults have high expectations of behaviour from the day children start in the Nursery Year. Routines are well established. Pupils respond to this and behave well. Pupils say bullying is rare. They are confident that adults deal with any issues quickly.

The school offers excellent pastoral support to pupils and their families. Adults know each pupil extremely well. They are quick to spot any changes in their well-being and take swift action. Pupils are safe and well looked after.

School leaders are proud of the inclusive, community feel that exists. Parents appreciate all the school has to offer. One parent's comment was typical, 'The school is a fantastic asset to the local community.'

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

Leaders are ambitious and work hard to provide high-quality education and care. They have designed an inclusive and ambitious curriculum which has pupils' needs at its heart. However, some middle leaders have not yet had the opportunity to monitor the areas they lead. This means they are not sure how well the curriculum is being implemented for all pupils.

Children in the Nursery get off to a flying start. Nursery staff know the children extremely well and ensure their needs are met. Staff prioritise the development of children's speech and language. They provide a wealth of opportunities for children to develop their social and communication skills. Children are able to play happily together, socialise and behave well. For example, inspectors saw children playing with a train set and able to take turns without squabbling.

Pupils have a wide range of learning experiences from the moment they start school in Reception. Pupils with SEND learn the same curriculum content as their peers. Teachers adapt the work carefully to allow pupils to experience success and achieve well.

Teachers use assessment to identify gaps in pupils' learning. They revisit prior learning to help pupils remember the most important knowledge and for it to stick in their memory. However, assessment is not yet fully developed in all subjects. This

means that in a minority of subjects, teachers do not know how well pupils remember the content they have been taught to enable them to make the best possible progress.

Leaders recognise the critical importance of getting pupils to read as soon as possible. They expect every pupil to become a fluent reader. Younger children learn phonics from the start. They use this knowledge well when they read. Staff receive training that gives them the knowledge and skills to teach early reading with confidence. Reading books match the sounds that pupils know. Staff quickly spot pupils who may be at risk of falling behind. They intervene with additional support, which enables pupils to catch up with their peers. Story time is a firm favourite for children in the Nursery. This love of books young children acquire spreads across the school. Pupils talk with enthusiasm about their favourite books. Older pupils describe how they enjoy the 'cliffhangers' in the stories they hear and their excitement about what will happen next.

Leaders have developed an effective personal, social and health education curriculum. Assemblies and off-site activities are well chosen to help pupils understand and accept people with differences. Nobody is left out at this school. Staff provide high-quality pastoral care. Pupils value the chance to discuss any worries or concerns. They understand the importance of behaving well. As a result, behaviour in lessons and during social times is typically calm.

Staff love working at the Nursery and school. They appreciate the training which develops their knowledge and expertise to support learning. Leaders are conscious of staff's workload and consider ways to help them manage this.

Trust leaders and governors know what is working well and what needs to improve. They hold school leaders to account effectively for the quality of education.

Many parents would recommend the school to others. They comment that their children are safe, well looked after and enjoy school. They have confidence in the new leadership and talk positively about the changes already put in place.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff are well trained to notice and report any signs of concern. Leaders are swift to support pupils and families in need of help. They do not hesitate to escalate concerns when needed. Leaders carry out the required checks on the suitability of staff to work with pupils.

Leaders provide a curriculum that teaches pupils to understand age-appropriate risks, including personal safety and how to be safe online. Pupils know that adults will listen to them if they have any concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some middle leaders have not yet had the opportunity to monitor the areas they lead. This means they are not sure how well the curriculum is being implemented for all pupils. Leaders need to ensure that middle leaders are able to check the quality of provision to assure themselves pupils achieve as well as they can.
- Assessment is not yet consistently established in all subjects. As a result, pupils' recall of prior learning is not always secure. Leaders need to ensure that staff use assessment effectively to check what pupils know and remember across all subjects.

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](#)' 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	136601
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10211872
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	189
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Brian Kirkup
Headteacher	Emma Tovey (Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.weareacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Weare Academy First School converted to become an academy school in April 2011. When its predecessor school, Weare Church of England First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school is part of Wessex Learning, a multi-academy trust. It joined the trust in September 2016.
- The executive headteacher started in post in September 2022. She is also the executive headteacher of Wedmore First School.
- Weare Academy is a Church of England voluntary controlled school in the Diocese of Bath and Wells.
- Rainbow Wood Nursery is part of the school and was inspected at the same time as the school.
- 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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the executive headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other school staff and three members of the local governing body. The lead inspector spoke with the chief executive officer, the director of education and the lead special education needs coordinator from the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 read to an adult. Story time was visited in Year 1.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation, including the safeguarding checks carried out on staff working at the school. They considered how well the designated safeguarding lead acts on concerns about pupils' welfare and safety. Inspectors talked to pupils, staff, governors and trustees about how the school keeps everyone safe.
- Inspectors held a telephone conversation with the assistant director of education from the Diocese of Bath and Wells.
- The lead inspector considered key documentation, including school improvement plans and governors' minutes.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. An inspector met with the deputy headteacher and the inclusion manager to discuss and scrutinise how they respond to behaviour incidents and pupils' attendance.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text replies and responses to the staff and pupil surveys. Inspectors spoke with parents at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Jen Southall, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Teresa Hill

Ofsted Inspector

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