

Inspection of Arrow Valley First School

Colts Lane, Redditch, Worcestershire B98 0LH

Inspection dates: 20 and 21 February 2024

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

The principal of this school is Sarah Allen-Fletcher. This school is part of Central Region Schools 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), Guy Shears, and overseen by a board of trustees, co-chaired by Elizabeth Keates and Orla MacSherry.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and the adults employed here all enjoy being part of Arrow Valley. One member of staff, summing up the view of other colleagues, said, 'I love coming to work here.' The 'Valley Values' are at the heart of the school's work. Pupils fully embrace them, to be 'safe, kind, hard-working, resilient, respectful, and honest'.

The school wants all pupils to do as well as they can. It has successfully prioritised raising standards in reading, writing and mathematics, including for disadvantaged pupils.

There are high standards expected of behaviour, to which pupils adhere. They are friendly to each other and polite to visitors. Some pupils struggle in managing their behaviour and emotions. The school has put in place measures to ensure that these pupils can be included successfully in the life of the school. Attendance is improving strongly. All staff are vigilant to ensure that pupils feel safe. Their tagline is, 'It could happen here.'

Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities to bring their learning to life. These include watching a four-string quartet perform, going on a field trip to the local country park and learning to swim. They are articulate and can use a wide subject-specific vocabulary when talking about their experiences.

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

The school has successfully adopted and developed a trust-wide curriculum that is ambitious in its scope and extent. It is designed well to enable pupils to build on previous knowledge they have learned. For example, pupils could use what they already knew about herbivores and carnivores to learn about food chains, predators and prey. Children from early years onwards are exposed to technical vocabulary such as 'oesophagus'. They are fluent when using such terms and can recall previous learning. Pupils do well in their Year 2 assessments in reading, writing and mathematics.

In some subjects, curriculum leadership is relatively new. The quality of pupils' written work and presentation in these subjects does not reflect the high standards they achieve in their English writing books.

When children join in Reception, they start learning to read almost straight away. All adults are faithful to the phonics programme. Almost all pupils reach the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. Where this is not the case, the school provides effective support to enable those who find reading difficult, have fallen behind, or are at an early stage of reading to catch up. Pupils can use their phonics skills to sound out unfamiliar words. Consequently, they are quickly developing their confidence and fluency, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils at all stages enjoy reading and talking to adults about their books.

The school has developed effective systems to check regularly whether pupils have acquired the intended learning. In subjects such as history, there are quizzes throughout, not just at the end of a unit. Questioning in lessons helps pupils recall their previous learning, for example through fact files on significant people.

Adaptions for pupils with SEND help them to achieve the learning objectives set for all pupils. Work is carefully structured to support them. There are times, however, when the overuse of worksheets and structured activities for all pupils in the class limits what some pupils can write independently.

The school has an increasing number of pupils with SEND who have complex needs and require a bespoke programme and high levels of support. The school is highly effective in including these pupils in lessons wherever possible and managing their behavioural and emotional needs. Leaders are tenacious in seeking the additional the external support and provision that many pupils still require.

Pupils demonstrate the 'Valley Values' in how they respond positively to those from backgrounds and faiths that are different from their own. They enjoy learning about festivals such as Diwali and Eid. They contribute to the local community through performing at the local care home and delivering food parcels that they have helped to compile. They enjoy taking on responsibilities, such as becoming play leaders, and making choices about aspects of the wider curriculum, including 'science growing week' and 'wear what makes you happy day'.

Parents and carers and staff are overwhelmingly positive in their responses to how the school has improved under the principal's leadership. Capacity has been further strengthened through support from the trust. Staff are very appreciative of how their workload is taken into account. Governors are highly knowledgeable about the school and effective in their dual role of challenge and support. However, there is not yet a shared understanding among leaders and governors of who has oversight for pupils learning English as an additional language (EAL).

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leadership and monitoring are still new in some foundation subjects. As a result, pupils' written work in these subjects does not reflect what they have learned and can recall verbally. Leaders should ensure that expectations of writing are as consistently high in all subjects as they are in English.
- There is not a shared understanding among leaders and governors of where leadership of EAL lies. As a result, staff are not as well informed about pupils' backgrounds and needs as they are for pupils with SEND. Leaders should ensure

that leadership of EAL raises all staff knowledge and understanding of pupils' EAL needs.

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	148140
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10294704
Type of school	First school
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	152
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Elizabeth Keates and Orla MacSherry (Co-Chairs)
CEO of trust	Guy Shears
Principal	Sarah Allen-Fletcher
Website	www.arrowvalleyfirstschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school opened in April 2021. When its predecessor school, Roman Way First School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to require special measures.
- The vice-principal was appointed in September 2022.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND has increased significantly and is well above the national average.
- The school does not make use of 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 had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the principal, vice-principal, assistant headteacher and other leaders and staff.
- Inspectors spoke to several groups of pupils.
- An inspector met the chair of the governing body and vice-chair of the trust. He also met the CEO of the trust and the executive principal.
- Inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments, and responses to the staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also listened to pupils read and discussed the curriculum in some other subjects, including the early years foundation stage.
- 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.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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