

Birchfields Primary School

Lytham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6PL

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is effectively led and managed by the headteacher, senior leaders and governors. They are committed to providing pupils with a high standard of education.
- The headteacher has a clear and strong vision to meet the wide and varying needs of pupils and their families. As a result, all pupils have equal opportunities to do well here.
- There are positive, caring relationships between staff and pupils. These strong relationships give pupils the skills and confidence to do their best and to persevere.
- The quality of teaching across the school is good. Leaders and teachers plan together to create interesting lessons which engage pupils.
- The early years provision is well led and children make a great start to their education due to high-quality teaching and work that is well matched to their needs.
- Pupils' behaviour in classes and around school is exemplary. They are well behaved, polite and courteous with each other and with adults.
- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They are safe and treat everyone with respect, regardless of differences. Pupils learn from each other within this diverse community.
- Historically, pupils do not make strong enough progress in reading and mathematics during key stage 2. The picture for current pupils is improving rapidly across all subjects.
- The wide range of strategies recently introduced across the school to improve reading and mathematics are not yet fully embedded. As a result, leaders have not yet evaluated the impact of these strategies to ascertain their effectiveness in improving outcomes.
- Middle leadership is strong and continuing to develop. Some middle leaders do not yet play a full role in subject improvement.
- Some senior leaders do not have all the information required to fully establish the impact of additional spending on pupils' attendance and well-being.
- Some pupils, including the most able, are not routinely sufficiently challenged in lessons. Too few pupils reach the higher standards at the end of key stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics. Disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their peers in phonics.
- Transition from early years into key stage 1 is not fully effective in building on the strong beginnings that children experience in Nursery and Reception classes.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress of key stage 2 pupils in reading and mathematics.
- Further improve leadership and management by:
 - improving transition from early years to key stage 1 so that rates of progress and learning continue at a high rate
 - continuing to develop the role of middle leaders so that they quality assure the teaching of the wider curriculum to share good practice throughout the school
 - improving communication between senior leaders so that the impact of funding can be fully evidenced
 - continuing to embed strategies to improve reading and mathematics and evaluate the impact these have on pupils' progress.
- Continue to improve teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the variations in the progress of groups of pupils continue to reduce, particularly for disadvantaged pupils in phonics
 - providing consistently high levels of challenge for all pupils so that greater proportions are able to achieve the higher standard and greater depth, particularly at key stage 1.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership and management at all levels is strong. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work as a cohesive team to lead this large school in challenging circumstances. The proportion of pupils who transfer into the school during the academic year is high. Leaders work hard to welcome and integrate pupils so that they quickly begin to settle into the school and learn.
- Senior leaders share the headteacher's commitment to improving standards throughout the school. Leaders ensure that staff have development time together to plan to deliver good-quality teaching across the school. Senior leaders monitor standards in reading, writing and mathematics closely and put interventions in place swiftly to address any underachievement.
- The special educational needs (SEN) coordinator and middle leaders are knowledgeable and committed. They are enthusiastic and keen to continue to drive forward improvements in the wider curriculum. Middle leaders plan to develop their leadership by taking a fuller role in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning to share good practice.
- Leaders provide good support for recently qualified teachers and staff who are new to the school. These staff feel valued and quickly develop an understanding of policies and procedures. Leaders support new staff well through training and individual guidance. All staff value the professional development they receive. Staff are well motivated and enjoy working at the school.
- Leaders make good use of links with other schools, both locally and across the north west. Leaders ensure that staff moderate their teacher assessments with other schools in the cluster. Leaders relish opportunities to visit other schools to see a wide range of strategies and implement the more successful ones, such as strategies to improve reading.
- Clear systems are in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. These systems link closely to appraisal procedures and to improving the progress of pupils. Leaders are aware that, despite planning together and shared development time, there are still aspects for further improvement in the quality of teaching.
- The carefully planned curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to learn a wide range of skills and knowledge. Pupils enjoy their project work and talk with enthusiasm about studying topics such as the Egyptians and space.
- The work of middle leaders to ensure breadth and coverage of the national curriculum means that pupils receive a well-balanced and broad range of subjects. Provision for music and physical education is strong and pupils value the opportunities to be involved in choir, learn an instrument and take part in a variety of sports.
- Visits and extra-curricular activities enhance the wider curriculum. For example, when studying the Egyptians, pupils visited exhibitions at the Manchester Museum. To supplement pupils' learning about space, they visited the observatory at Jodrell Bank. Through these additional experiences, pupils' experiences are broadened and learning

is deepened.

- Leadership of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is strong. As a result, pupils know about religions other than their own and show a deep respect for all people, regardless of differences. British values are well embedded within the school and pupils are taught the values of respect, democracy, the rule of law and tolerance.
- Leaders and staff have worked hard to improve the attendance of all pupils, including the potentially more vulnerable. The attendance officer develops strong relationships with families. As a result, attendance is improving and the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school is decreasing towards the national average. Parents and carers now work more closely with staff and are generally supportive of the school.
- Leaders and governors use the pupil premium funding well to support disadvantaged pupils. Extra support provides help for those who need it and is well targeted. For example, teaching assistants provide additional support for pupils. The student and family support team oversee the progress of vulnerable pupils. Learning mentors run well-being interventions in the 'sunshine room' to develop confidence and self-esteem. However, leadership of this area does not yet have a full picture of the impact of this expenditure.
- Sports premium funding is used to good effect. Pupils are involved in a wide range of sports and physical activity. They take part in sporting competitions and enjoy after-school clubs, such as cricket, table-tennis, gymnastics and hockey.
- Leaders have put in place a wide variety of strategies to improve the progress of pupils in reading and mathematics. These have not yet had sufficient time to embed or to see the impact on pupils' outcomes over time.
- Although leaders are beginning to improve progress for current pupils in key stage 2, they are aware that rapid progress needs to be secured, so that pupils make progress more in line with that of their peers nationally from similar starting points. Pupils' achievement also needs to improve so that more disadvantaged pupils achieve the required standard in the Year 1 phonics check.

Governance of the school

- Governors are passionate and ambitious for the school. They know the strengths of the school well. They have full confidence in the leadership team to drive further improvements, particularly in key stage 2. Governors receive information from leaders about all aspects of the school's work, which enables them to challenge and support leaders.
- Governors and leaders work closely to ensure that the additional funding the school receives for those pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is used wisely. Consequently, these pupils are supported well and make good progress relevant to their own individual starting points.
- Governors are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and ensure that pupils' safety is a top priority of the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding is strong, as is the culture of care and support for all pupils and their families. Leaders are quick to identify any families needing support and signpost them to external agencies who can support them.
- Staff are well trained and updated regularly. They are fully aware of their responsibilities in making sure pupils are safe. Staff know how to report any concerns and are vigilant.
- Safeguarding records and policies are comprehensive and clear. All statutory checks on staff, governors and visitors are complete and thorough. The single central record is compliant with latest guidelines.
- As the designated safeguarding lead, the headteacher has an in-depth knowledge of individual pupils and their families. Together with the student and family support team, the headteacher works hard to support vulnerable pupils and develop close links with their families and get them timely and appropriate help.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Warm and positive relationships between staff and pupils underpin learning in this school. Pupils show good levels of engagement and want to do well in their lessons. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and pupils respond well, demonstrating exceptionally good attitudes to learning from early years classes up to Year 6.
- Teachers and senior leaders have good subject knowledge and use it well when planning together to create enjoyable activities for pupils. Pupils told inspectors how much they enjoyed their learning. When pupils are actively involved in their lessons, learning deepens.
- Teachers use questioning well to help pupils understand concepts and overcome any misconceptions. When opportunities are given for pupils to develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills, some pupils can explain their rationale clearly. Leaders are aware that more work needs to be done to improve pupils' reasoning and problem-solving skills in mathematics.
- Leaders' strategy to develop a 'growth mindset' with pupils develops the resilience of pupils and is having a positive impact on their attitudes to learning. As the vast majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, leaders see resilience and perseverance as key attributes to develop in pupils. As a result of this strategy, pupils are coping well with the demands of learning both English as an additional language and meeting the requirements of national assessments.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Pupils are supported through individual support or in small intervention groups to focus on particular skills. Teaching assistants are effective and skilled in scaffolding concepts to ensure that pupils catch up on any gaps in their learning. For example, a small group of Year 2 pupils were well supported to draw and label axes correctly when drawing bar charts.

- Recently introduced strategies to improve talking are beginning to boost pupils' confidence. Pupils regularly answer confidently in full sentences and teachers model good use of language. When learning is clearly structured, pupils know what to do and are able to work independently or in small groups to achieve success. These strategies designed to bring about rapid improvements in key stage 2 are beginning to show positive results in both pupils' work and in assessment data.
- While teachers' expectations of pupils are high, sometimes the work set, particularly for the most able, does not challenge them sufficiently to make enough progress to reach greater depth, especially at key stage 1. Work seen in books shows that some pupils rarely make mistakes and could be challenged to drive their learning forward more rapidly.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school is a community where adults and pupils treat each other with respect and equality. The wide range of cultures in the school leads to a diverse community which lives by a set of shared values. Pupils understand, remember and live the school's core values of 'equality, respect, resilience, good health, honesty and kindness'.
- The overwhelming majority of pupils are confident, self-assured learners. Right from early years up to Year 6, pupils are proud of their work and want to share their success with others. Leaders have introduced lessons to develop further the resilience and perseverance of pupils. These are helping them to develop into young people who are well-equipped and well-prepared for high school. For example, Year 5 pupils, learning about the power of 'yet' could confidently explain to inspectors how they could learn a new skill that they hadn't quite mastered 'yet'.
- Pupils are eager to talk about their positive experiences at school and told inspectors how safe they feel in school and how much they enjoy their learning. Pupils are adamant that bullying occurs very rarely and are confident that any instances are dealt with swiftly. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, both personally and online. Visitors to school regularly deliver sessions so that pupils know where to seek help and how to help others.
- Relationships across the school are strong and caring. As a result, pupils trust staff and feel that they can go to an adult if they are worried about anything. Pupils have a keen awareness of how to keep themselves healthy.
- Leaders' aim is to instil in pupils positive characteristics, values and habits which 'last a lifetime'. Pupils embrace this approach as they eagerly undertake positions of responsibility within the school. Older pupils take on roles such as being prefects, head boy and head girl.
- Through the work of the pupil council, 'B-Force', pupils reinforce the ideals 'Be safe, be happy, be heard'. Pupils are democratically voted onto the council and pupils told inspectors that the key characteristics for success were that pupils had to be 'caring and kind'. Pupils value their role on 'B-Force' as it gives them the opportunity to help

others. They deliver assemblies on issues such as discrimination, anti-bullying and failure. Pupils explained to inspectors how 'fail' was just a 'first attempt in learning'. This positive mindset is modelled by the pupil council and seen throughout the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Behaviour in lessons is excellent and there is very little low-level disruption as the vast majority of pupils have a strong desire to learn. Behaviour in and around school is impressive. Pupils move around the building in an orderly and quiet manner. This reflects the school's effective and consistent strategies.
- Leadership of behaviour is strong. Pupils are clear on the incentives to behave and the consequences of their behaviour.
- Pupils have high expectations of themselves, both academically and socially. They always try to do their best and achieve well by trying their best. Pupils consistently demonstrate respect for adults and other children. They regularly help each other in lessons and are polite and well-mannered with everyone they meet.
- During social time, pupils behave well and play cooperatively with each other. They share equipment and take turns well. At lunchtime, pupils line up in an orderly manner and eat their dinners without fuss.
- Pupils are able to self-regulate their behaviour and are proud of their school. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with the national average for primary schools and is improving. Leaders and staff work closely with families to improve the attendance of all pupils, including pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The school very rarely excludes pupils for poor behaviour and records show that good behaviour is the norm. Parents and staff also commend the excellent behaviour in school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children make excellent progress in the early years, despite many children starting with skills and abilities below those typical for their age. Due to the outstanding provision in early years, pupils leave Reception in line with the national average for achieving a good level of development. As a result, they are prepared well for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils make continued progress in key stage 1 to further build on the skills developed in the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is just in line with the national averages but the proportion of pupils achieving greater depth is low. Nevertheless, from their low starting points, this represents good progress for pupils. Leaders recognise that transition into Year 1 could be developed further to continue pupils' high rates of progress in the early years.
- Pupils' attainment in phonics at the end of Year 1 is in line with the national average for all pupils, but disadvantaged pupils do not achieve as well as their peers either in

school or nationally. Leaders are aware of this and have implemented targeted support and interventions to ensure that current pupils are on track to achieve success.

- The good start children get in the early years foundation stage and key stage 1 falters during key stage 2. In 2017, pupils' attainment and progress in mathematics and reading were below that seen nationally for other pupils from the same starting points.
- However, leaders have taken decisive and rapid action to implement a range of strategies to improve progress and attainment in these areas. Consequently, the work seen in books and information provided by the school indicates that current pupils are making an increasingly rapid rate of progress in all subject areas.
- Current work in books and assessment information provided by the school shows that most pupils across key stage 2 are working at the expected standards and that many are working beyond this. Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities, make good progress in most subject areas. There are some differences which still persist for some pupils in some year groups, but leaders and teachers are aware of where these exist and use a range of intervention strategies to address these.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language are supported very well, despite limited school resources. Pupils who are new to the school are assessed quickly and additional support is put in place. This enables pupils to access all areas of the curriculum alongside their classmates.
- All pupils receive additional help to develop their language skills. The new system in place is showing early signs of good progress but it is not yet fully embedded. Strategies to improve reading and writing have been implemented by teachers in all classes and these too are showing positive early signs of improving progress for key stage 2 pupils.
- Pupils of all ages and abilities, including disadvantaged pupils, read effectively. Many pupils say that through the additional focus on reading across the school they believe that their reading is improving. Inspectors heard pupils read confidently and with expression. Most-able key stage 1 pupils were able to read punctuation correctly, use information to describe characters and predict a feasible ending. Lower-ability readers in key stage 1 applied their phonic skills to help them understand their reading.
- Pupils in this school have an appetite for reading. From a very early age, pupils share books and have positive attitudes to reading. The library is a warm and welcoming space where children enjoy reading. Teachers work hard to open up the world of reading to their pupils and are successful in this.
- Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to explore and learn across the curriculum. Pupils in early years and key stage 1 make consistently strong progress. Current key stage 2 pupils are making better progress in all subjects than in previous years.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children get off to a flying start in early years. A high proportion of children leave and join the school each year during Nursery and Reception years. Nevertheless, leaders and staff ensure that every child, for however long they attend Birchfields early years,

makes excellent progress.

- Children start school with skills and abilities typically below those expected for their age, with a large proportion of pupils well below the expected levels of development. Almost all pupils speak English as an additional language and are not proficient in either English or their home language when they start school.
- During the early years, children make outstanding progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils who reach a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year is in line with national averages and represents outstanding progress for the vast majority of children.
- High-quality teaching, good provision and the commitment of all staff to ensuring the development of children are prevalent across all classes and groups. All interactions between staff and children are underpinned by positive, caring and strong relationships.
- Staff are excellent role models for children and their parents. Parents are welcomed into early years and regularly 'stay and play', taking part in phonics songs and dances to continue to support their children's learning at home. Links with parents are strong. From initial home visits, parents are encouraged to be heavily involved in their child's learning. Leaders constantly review and reflect on home links, to improve and refine their relationships with parents.
- Early years is extremely well led. Leaders have a very clear view of the strengths and areas for development of the foundation stage. Leaders organise the curriculum and provision effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers plan activities that capture the interests and imagination of children and provide them with fun and purposeful experiences. For example, when learning a new letter sound, children are excited to choose items beginning with the letter 'f' out of a bag. All children are eager to learn and practise their pronunciation together.
- High-quality phonics teaching promotes enthusiasm and children's desire to learn. Activities are well planned to meet the individual needs of children. Children who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress through carefully guided learning and well-targeted support.
- Children behave very well. They quickly learn to share and cooperate well with each other. Children also begin to show care and concern for their peers. They play well together and alongside each other.
- Assessment and tracking of children's progress is accurate and detailed. From the information gathered, further activities are planned which enable children to make progress in areas of need identified for them. Children have excellent attitudes to learning. From entering early years with poor communication skills, children quickly develop in this stimulating environment to bubbly, enthusiastic children who are keen to share their successes with adults. They chatter about their work with excitement and are confident enough to begin to respond clearly in sentences and talk in front of others.
- Leaders ensure that statutory welfare requirements are met. Children are safe and their needs are well met. They are exceptionally well cared for. Children are happy and make excellent progress from their starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	130380
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10045177

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	724
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Rebecca Jones
Headteacher	Miss Samantha Offord
Telephone number	0161 224 3892
Website	www.birchfieldsprimary.net
Email address	admin@birchfields.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 May 2013

Information about this school

- Birchfields Primary school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is higher than that found nationally.
- The vast majority of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, mainly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at other than the normal point in the school year is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is below the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning throughout the school. Some lesson observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- The inspectors met with pupils, both formally and informally, to listen to their views and hear them read.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, recently qualified teachers, middle leaders and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation that covered: information about pupils' attainment and progress; the school's self-evaluation and its improvement plan; records relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour, and safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils at breaks, lunchtimes and in lessons. Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in lessons and looked at samples of their books, jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors considered the views expressed by parents and staff who responded to surveys undertaken by leaders. Inspectors also spoke to parents informally on the playground.
- As part of the inspection, inspectors considered the views expressed by parents in the 13 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, as well as comments received via the free-text facility on Parent View. Inspectors also took into account the 41 responses to a questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

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