

Birstall Primary Academy

Chapel Lane, Birstall, Batley, West Yorkshire WF17 9EE

Inspection dates

23–24 October 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have created a positive, inclusive learning environment where pupils become confident learners.
- Trust members and governors have an accurate view of the school. They work well together to ensure that school leaders have the right support and challenge to improve the school.
- Pupils' progress in writing is speeding up because teachers consistently apply leaders' strategies for improvement. Pupils have many opportunities to try out and refine their writing skills.
- Strong teaching in phonics results in almost all pupils achieving the phonics standard at the end of Year 1.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning and their school. Successful relationships established across the school ensure that pupils feel safe, well cared for and want to do their best.
- Safeguarding is effective because leaders have made sure that everyone has an excellent understanding of how to keep pupils safe.
- Children get a warm welcome to school life in the early years. Their emotional, social and academic needs are well catered for.
- In their ambition to give pupils a well-rounded education, leaders provide exciting opportunities for learning across a wide curriculum.
- Leaders have identified that subject leaders now need more experience and knowledge of checking the impact their work has on pupils' progress.
- Work on problem solving and reasoning in mathematics lacks frequency and consistency. Consequently, pupils do not make strong progress in mathematics in all year groups. Leaders have identified mathematics for further improvement.
- Leaders and the trust have identified the right overall priorities for improvement. However, plans do not precisely identify which aspects of teaching and learning, in the early years and key stages 1 and 2, most need rapid improvement.
- Although the teaching of reading has improved as a result of effective guidance from leaders, pupils' vocabulary and inference skills require further development.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - refining school improvement plans so that they precisely identify the aspects of pupils' progress that most need to improve, including in the early years
 - continuing to implement trust and school leaders' plans to develop the experience and knowledge of subject leaders so that they have more influence on the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- Further improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - providing more frequent opportunities for pupils to solve problems in different contexts and to develop their reasoning so that they deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills in mathematics
 - ensuring that the teaching of reading pinpoints specific aspects where pupils need to improve their understanding and knowledge.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders are passionate about providing a safe and secure environment where pupils do well. The principal ensures that the school's mantra, 'A small school with a big heart', is exemplified by the whole staff team. This results in pupils feeling safe and valued. Leaders' have also channelled their efforts into improving pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics and this is resulting in gains in the proportion of pupils who reach the national expected and higher standards.
- Trust leaders know the school well. They use their knowledge of strengths within the academy trust to support Birstall Primary Academy school leaders in improvement and maintain a culture of high expectations. Leaders and staff members welcome the opportunity to see best practice in other schools and work with specialists, as well as the opportunity to share their own expertise, for example in phonics.
- School leaders and the trust have collectively devised a school improvement plan that headlines the key priorities to secure pupils' progress. While these overall priorities are the right ones for the school, they do not identify precisely enough the specific aspects of pupils' progress that most need acceleration, for example in reading and in the early years.
- Leaders have effective systems in place to check pupils' attainment and progress over their time in school. They carefully check the quality of teaching and swiftly provide support for staff when it is needed to ensure that teaching is at least good.
- Leaders have successfully implemented strategies to develop pupils' life-long love of reading in response to pupils' slower progress in reading over time. This work has created a strong foundation for pupils to build on and deepen their understanding of the books they read. However, the aspects of pupils' vocabulary, inference, and understanding of different text types that most need improvement are not explicit enough in school improvement plans. Therefore, checks on actions being taken are not precise, nor is the feedback about the success of these actions.
- The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities is used well. Leaders ensure that a wide range of strategies and activities are in place to address barriers that pupils may have to their learning. Good communication between leaders, staff and parents and carers, including feedback on the success of actions being taken, supports pupils in making good progress.
- Leaders have planned a curriculum to widen pupils' knowledge and experiences across a range of subjects. Pupils are motivated to learn. Leaders have a clear view of what they want pupils to achieve. Leaders are working with other schools in the trust to develop opportunities for pupils to broaden their experiences further. However, leaders rightly recognise that subject leaders need more opportunities to understand and check on the quality of learning in their subject and the progress pupils make in their subjects over their time in school.
- The sports leader has ensured that pupils have access to a wide range of sports activities. Action has been taken to ensure that the additional primary school physical

education and sport funding is directed well to develop pupils' skills and experiences effectively.

Governance of the school

- Governance is strong. The local governing board and trust representatives have an accurate view of the school through the receipt of regular reports from school leaders, and through their visits to school to check on the effectiveness of leaders' actions for improvement. They hold leaders to account and strongly support the hard work of the whole staff team.
- Governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and carry out their work diligently. They ask insightful questions, for example about the impact of additional funding on the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors' work to ensure that leaders have effective systems to identify and address the needs of disadvantaged pupils is a strength.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Recruitment of, and checks on, new staff are carried out conscientiously and with thoroughness. Members of the trust and the governing body check that records are accurate and up to date. Leaders ensure that all staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding when they start at the school and have subsequent timely updates. As a result, all staff know exactly how to identify, report and record concerns about pupils. The system for recording concerns is fit for purpose. Leaders monitor records closely to ensure that appropriate actions are taken and followed up swiftly.
- The principal and pastoral leader work in close partnership to support pupils and their families. Leaders report that work with other agencies has improved. Leaders are persistent in ensuring that pupils receive prompt help. Parents appreciate this support for their families.
- Pupils trust the adults in school to help them to keep safe. They can confidently explain procedures in school and at breaktimes that are for their safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching and learning is good because staff, school leaders and members of the trust work effectively together to implement strategies for improvement. Staff training and bespoke support ensure that everyone feels confident in carrying out their roles effectively. Classrooms are calm, well organised and inviting. Pupils enjoy their learning and are proud of their work, which is displayed effectively.
- Leaders' direction about how to improve pupils' writing is consistently applied by teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils have frequent opportunities to practise basic skills in writing and then apply them to longer pieces of work. Teachers and teaching assistants give pupils effective guidance in how to edit and improve their work, in line with the school's policy. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. As a result, pupils write confidently, and at length, taking care in presentation, application of spelling and the overall quality of their work. Their progress in writing is much

improved.

- Good phonics teaching is helping pupils get off to a good start with reading. All pupils, including those of lower ability, use phonics effectively to decode new words. Energetic and engaging teaching encourages pupils to join in and practise saying letter sounds and applying them to writing. Almost all pupils pass the phonics standard by the end of their time in Year 1.
- The staff team has instilled a love of reading in pupils, who talk with animation about the class texts they are sharing. The school environment celebrates pupils' work in reading. Spaces around school, such as the new library, have been carefully planned to make high-quality reading materials accessible to all pupils. Pupils particularly enjoy sharing class texts. During the inspection, pupils in key stage 2 were involved in an English task linked to their topic about Pompeii. One of the pupils said of their recent class text, 'I loved the book "Escape to Pompeii". I wanted it to never end.'
- In mathematics, observations of learning and current pupils' work show that pupils have frequent opportunities to develop fluency in their number skills. Pupils use practical resources well to support their learning, where appropriate. Pupils have some opportunities to apply their skills to problem-solving and reasoning tasks. However, school leaders acknowledge that this is inconsistent across school and is an area already highlighted for school improvement.
- Pupils enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects. Their work in the curriculum includes meaningful activities to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding as well as promoting fundamental values that are helping them to become good citizens. This work is a strength. In science, pupils develop their skills of hypothesis, interpretation and analysis well.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged are well supported in making good progress. There is a good understanding of pupils' starting points and the barriers they may have to learning. Learning and additional support is carefully matched to pupils' needs, so that they can become confident independent learners. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, adults intervened at appropriate times and used questioning effectively to support pupils' learning. They withdrew to ensure that pupils carried out the task independently with renewed confidence.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders have created a safe and welcoming environment where the welfare of pupils and their families is a high priority.
- Leaders have given some pupils the opportunity to have positions of responsibility, which they rise to ably and enthusiastically. For example, welcome monitors in key stage 2 give visitors to their classrooms a friendly, detailed and articulate overview of the learning they are involved in. One pupil described how the junior leadership team (JLT) has the important roles of 'making sure that everyone is safe and happy, as well as improving the school'. The JLT meet with the governing body to talk about learning

in the school and discuss overall improvement. They recently met to discuss what greater depth in learning is. They have been successful in consulting about and actioning the installation of new playground markings and water bottles for everyone.

- Pupils are keen to talk about their learning. Older pupils in particular take pride in their work and their appearance.
- Many parents say that the care the staff team shows is a strength of the school. They mention in particular the before- and after-school club provision and the support for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- Pupils feel safe in the school and say that the school deals with their concerns and any instances of bullying well. Older pupils have a good understanding of the benefits and potential dangers of the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are full of enthusiasm for their learning. They are polite, courteous and welcoming to visitors. They conduct themselves well throughout the day, for example in lessons, breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- In lessons, pupils respond well to instructions from their teachers. They are keen to help each other with their work and they are eager to do the best they can. Pupils say behaviour is typically good and the way in which the school manages behaviour works well. Parents agree with them, and the school's behaviour records support these views.
- Where it is necessary, teachers support individual pupils using strategies which encourage them to modify their behaviour in lessons appropriately. On the rare occasions where learning behaviour is not as strong, teachers use a colour card system which ensures that pupils achieve, and learning time is used productively.
- During breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils interact with each other very well. They are caring about each other's welfare and enjoy social times, playing cooperatively together.
- Pupils' attendance is below the national average. However, leaders promote good attendance relentlessly, through a range of actions and strategies. Leaders and teachers work collaboratively with pupils, parents, the local authority, and other external agencies to identify and minimise any barriers to good attendance. Despite this, some parents still take pupils on holidays during term times, and this has a significant impact on the school's attendance figures.
- Leaders look for ways to involve pupils in different aspects of school improvement, for example arrival at school times. Their recent direction to pupils to be 'in the line by ten to nine' has motivated pupils to repeat the rhyme and improve their punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over time and overall, outcomes have improved, although in some aspects, the proportion of pupils reaching expected and higher standards is still below the national average. Current pupils' work and school assessment information show that improvement in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics continues.

Leaders are determined to support pupils in making more rapid progress so that even more pupils reach expected and higher standards.

- Outcomes in phonics in Year 1 are strong and have been substantially higher than the national averages for the past three years.
- In reading, provisional results for 2018 show continued improvement in the proportion of pupils reaching expected and higher standards, in key stage 1 and key stage 2. Pupils' progress in reading has improved steadily over the past three years. Key stage 1 results are now similar to the national averages.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing in key stage 1 and key stage 2 has risen steadily over the past three years. Provisional results show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils who met the expected standard in 2018 was still below the national average. The proportion of pupils reaching higher standards in both key stages remains below the national average. However, current pupils' work shows that pupils across all year groups are making good and improved progress.
- In mathematics, the proportion of key stage 1 pupils reaching the expected and higher standards has continued to rise and is now similar to the national average. After two years of improvement, provisional 2018 results show that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 dipped again to below the national average. Leaders have identified mathematics for focused improvement.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities have work that is well matched to their needs and they make good progress from their different starting points.
- Leaders have frequently checked on the progress of disadvantaged pupils. This high emphasis and careful monitoring have resulted in this group of pupils making stronger progress from their generally lower starting points. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils is diminishing.

Early years provision

Good

- Delightful relationships have been established in the early years that make children feel welcome, happy and cared for when they start school. Adults model good behaviour, language and learning very effectively and children quickly rise to their high expectations.
- The Reception indoor and outdoor spaces are stimulating and well organised. Areas of provision are planned carefully to support children's learning in all areas of the curriculum, but with particularly close attention to developing children's reading, writing and mathematics skills.
- The early years leader has a good understanding of how children learn. She knows each child well and what they need to do to take their next steps in all areas of the curriculum. Children's skills are checked as soon as they start school and adults plan provision and activities according to the next steps to be taken in learning. The early years leader knows how important it is to ensure that all adults have consistently high expectations of what children can do.
- The early years team plans activities that engage and excite children in learning. During the inspection, children could not wait to start practising the 'tricky words', because this involved putting on a witch's hat, writing the words, making a spell and

mixing the words in the cauldron.

- Adults plan the outdoor learning area carefully to ensure that children can practise the skills they have learned in adult-led activities independently and alongside their friends. For example, children listened carefully to, and joined in with, an activity led by an adult to recognise patterns, and then made their own patterns using large-scale equipment outside.
- Adults consistently model being kind and considerate about how others may feel. Every opportunity is taken to develop children's social and moral values. Children's personal development is given high priority in a safe and secure environment. Safeguarding is effective.
- Last year, a slightly lower proportion of children than the national average reached a good level of development in the summer term. Leaders worked effectively with the early years team to provide bespoke support to ensure that each child was better prepared for Year 1. Improvement plans aim to increase the proportion of children reaching a good level of development this year, but do not precisely identify which aspects most need to improve.

School details

Unique reference number	139356
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10053349

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	188
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Dan Spencer
Principal	Nadia Sweryt-Hannam
Telephone number	01924 471372
Website	www.focus-trust.co.uk/
Email address	birstall@focus-trust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 November 2014

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Focus Multi-Academy Trust. The school has a local governing body.
- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is slightly higher than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is similar to the national average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for the additional pupil premium funding is higher than the national average.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.

- The early years consists of a Reception class.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed lessons across a range of subjects in all classes. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with the principal or assistant principals.
- During visits to lessons, inspectors spoke with pupils and looked at their work to find out more about how well they are learning.
- Meetings were held with pupils, and inspectors talked informally with pupils around the school. Inspectors listened to pupils read and talked with them about reading. Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors met regularly with the principal and the assistant principals. They held meetings with the early years leader, the pastoral leader, the lead teachers for English, mathematics and pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, as well as curriculum leaders. Inspectors also met with members of the local governing body, and the chief executive officer and the academy improvement partner from the trust.
- Inspectors scrutinised range of documentation, including leaders' evaluation of school performance, school improvement plans, and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also reviewed the minutes of meetings of the local governing board and information relating to safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors met with parents and took into account the 33 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. They considered the 22 staff responses and the 14 pupils' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Kate Rowley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Barry Found

Her Majesty's Inspector

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