

Inspection of a good school: Langdale Free School

95 Warbreck Drive, Bispham, Blackpool, Lancashire FY2 9RZ

Inspection dates:

6 and 21 November 2019

Outcome

Langdale Free School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. This is reflected in their high levels of attendance. They know that they are well cared for by staff. Pupils say that they feel happy and safe. However, some told us that bullying occasionally occurs. They say that when it does occur staff deal with this quickly.

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Most of the time pupils behave well. However, pupils said that on occasions there is some disruption to learning. Some pupils shout out in lessons. This makes it hard for others to learn. This is because some teachers' expectations of pupils are not high enough.

Across subjects, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. This is particularly so in reading, writing and mathematics.

Many pupils learn to play musical instruments such as the ukulele and West African drums. Several enjoy singing and performing in the school band. Pupils participate in different sports, including football and netball. They relish school trips to Blackpool Zoo, the circus, theatres and museums. This broadens their horizons.

Leaders provide opportunities for pupils to become responsible citizens. Pupils regularly raise money for children's charities and for families in need of shelter and accommodation.

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

By the end of Year 6, pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. Parents and carers have also raised their concerns about how well their children are learning.

The new principal, supported by the school's executive director and governors, has introduced changes to staffing and the curriculum to bring about the necessary improvements. For example, pupils now benefit from a structured daily programme of reading. Younger pupils follow a systematic approach to learning phonics. The principal is

working closely with staff to devise a curriculum which interests and engages pupils. Teachers are beginning to check with accuracy what pupils know and can do.

The curriculums in science and physical education (PE) are not as well planned as subjects such as art, drama and music. The new leader for history and geography has a clear picture of what he wants pupils to know and understand, especially in key stage 2. However, there is more work to do to improve pupils' learning across many subjects.

The principal is working with staff to improve pupils' knowledge and skills in mathematics. Across the school, teachers focus on addressing the gaps in pupils' learning. Pupils' ability in using basic number operations is improving. However, too many pupils struggle with mathematical reasoning and problem-solving.

An increasing number of pupils start Year 1 with strong phonics skills. However, due to previously weaker teaching, few become fluent readers by the end of key stage 2. Teachers are now helping pupils to improve their ability to read. However, too many older pupils have not developed a love of books because they find reading difficult. They lack the comprehension skills needed to fully enjoy stories and poetry.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not achieve as well as they should. The principal knows that, previously, staff have not identified pupils' individual learning needs quickly enough. Leaders are now making sure that pupils get the support that they need to know and remember more.

Children in the early years achieve well. The well-planned curriculum ensures that children make good progress in recognising numbers and carrying out simple calculations. They behave well, follow instructions closely and enjoy finding out new things. Children have close bonds with staff.

Most children are attentive during story time. They enjoy following storylines and anticipating what may happen next. We saw this as children listened carefully to the 'Room on the Broom' story. Children named all the animals that joined the witch on the broom. They were mesmerised when their teacher found and wore the witch's lost hat.

The curriculum extends beyond developing pupils academically. Pupils understand democratic principles and like to have their say. There is an active school council. Recently, pupils planned a successful end-of-year disco, which helped to raise funds for more playground equipment. Most pupils participate in extra-curricular activities, including archery, debating and drama clubs.

Staff told us that the principal considers their welfare and workload. They feel that they are treated fairly and respectfully. Those new to teaching told us that the support they receive from experienced teachers helps them to improve their own teaching.

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) completed a financial management and governance review of the school in January 2019. Leaders have acted to resolve many of the issues highlighted in the review. They have made sure that the school's website reflects how pupil premium and sports premium funding are spent. They have also made clear what the governance arrangements at the school are. Leaders continue to work positively with the ESFA to resolve the other issues which were raised in the review.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff are trained to spot the signs of neglect and/or abuse. They know exactly what to do if they are concerned about the welfare of a pupil. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They understand internet safety and they know how to protect themselves from being exploited.

The school's safeguarding leaders are trained to a high standard. Staff work closely with a wide range of external agencies. Together, they ensure that pupils at risk of harm are promptly given the support that they need.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Standards have declined since the last inspection in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Senior leaders need to monitor closely the impact of recent initiatives on raising pupils' achievement across key stages 1 and 2. Leaders should ensure that pupils' achievement improves so that pupils are better prepared to take their next step into secondary school.
- The principal and governors recognise that the curriculum has not been well planned in the past. It has not provided pupils with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve well. Leaders need to ensure that the level of curriculum planning seen in art, drama and music is evident in all subjects.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is too variable. Some teaching assistants, including those working with pupils with complex learning needs, lack the specialist training that they need. This has a negative effect on the achievement of pupils with SEND. Leaders should provide staff with further training to know how best to support pupils with SEND. This will help to build pupils' confidence to engage fully in learning and to realise their potential.
- Pupils' behaviour is not consistently good. A small minority of pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour and this sometimes affects the learning of others. Leaders should ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills and policies to manage low-level disruption effectively in lessons.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first 8 inspection since we judged Langdale Free School to be good in June 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	140200
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10087764
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	112
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Alison Forrest
Principal	Pamela Eyre
Website	www.langdaleschool.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	23–24 June 2015

Information about this school

- Most staff are new to the school since the previous inspection. The principal joined the school in January 2019 and became the substantive principal in June 2019. Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the governing body has been appointed.

Information about this inspection

- We met with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and had a telephone discussion with the vice-chair of the governing body.
- We held meetings with the staff who oversee the provision for children in the early years, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND.
- We took account of nine text messages submitted during the inspection and 14 responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted’s online questionnaire. We considered responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaires completed by six members of staff. We also took account of the 14 pupil responses to Ofsted’s pupil questionnaire.
- We focused on reading, mathematics and geography during the inspection. For each subject, we met with the subject leader and teachers. We visited lessons, examined pupils’ work and talked with pupils about their learning.

- We met with pupils, teachers and other staff. We talked about safety, personal development and behaviour. We checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with children. We also talked with parents about matters relating to safety and scrutinised the school's safeguarding policy and related policies and documentation.

Inspection team

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