

Inspection of Blenheim Park Academy

Lancaster Road, Sculthorpe, Fakenham, Norfolk NR21 7PX

Inspection dates: 22–23 January 2020

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected as an academy

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at this school are happy and safe. They enjoy their time here, making use of the expansive grounds. Pupils confidently take part in discussions as part of the smaller group teaching that often happens. They are well supported at school. Any pupils who do not understand what has been taught get extra help quickly. There are lots of adults who pupils know can help them if they are worried about anything. Pupils spoken to during the inspection could not remember there being any bullying. They are confident that, if there were any, staff would deal with it quickly.

Leaders have raised the standard of teaching since the school became an academy. Pupils use their mathematical and reading skills well. However, the curriculum beyond English and mathematics has not, until very recently, supported pupils to develop a wide-ranging vocabulary. Pupils have limited recall of key knowledge from topics that they have covered in the past.

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

Since the school became an academy, leaders have taken effective action to improve all aspects of school life. There is now a stable staff team who work closely together to improve pupils' education.

Leaders have recently undertaken a complete review of the curriculum in all subjects other than English and mathematics. They have gone back to the core of each subject and considered exactly what pupils need to experience to make progress. This is all carefully planned out to a good quality. It has begun to be implemented but is at an early stage. It is too soon to be able to tell if it will be effective.

Pupils' work across the curriculum so far this academic year shows that there is not enough well-sequenced learning and progression. Pupils still find it hard to recall knowledge and vocabulary in subjects such as science and history.

The early years curriculum is at an early stage of being put into practice. Children in Reception are well settled. Parents and carers are happy with how they are doing. However, children's learning previously this year was not well sequenced. Most children in Reception are at a very early stage of learning to write. They are taught phonics well but do not have enough opportunities to practise writing with adults or in their play.

Reception children benefit from a new outside area which promotes physical development. Some of the existing early years area is not used as well as it could be. Children do not gain as much from the activities on offer as they should.

Pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities receive extra support as needed and sometimes are taught in smaller groups. They, alongside all pupils, are not yet able to remember enough of what they have been taught over time and to apply it to new learning.

Resources used in mathematics have helped more pupils to work at the right standard for their age. Pupils are confident using practical apparatus to help them understand mathematics. In some classes, the teaching of mathematics is not as clear as it needs to be. Pupils are able to discuss their mathematics but are not able to explain their ideas well enough in writing.

The teaching of reading is strong. Pupils' achievement reflects this. In key stage 2, reading is often done as a group, with pupils discussing the text with their teacher. Pupils enjoy reading. They choose from a good selection of books at appropriate levels for their abilities. Some pupils said that they would like to have more opportunities to also borrow other books, for example non-fiction and picture books, from the library.

Staff have worked hard to engage parents in their children's education. There are many activities, such as phonics workshops and sports cafes. These are well attended, as is the weekly celebration assembly. Most families come to this and it is a real bringing together of what pupils have achieved.

Staff make sure that pupils are knowledgeable about British values and what they mean in real life. Pupils are given lots of chances to debate. The school council has a say in how funding for things like play equipment is used. Staff listen to pupils' opinions and act on them if needed. When current affairs come up in discussion, staff take time to talk about them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are kept safe. Staff have comprehensive training to know about different risks that pupils might face. Where there are any concerns, they are dealt with quickly and appropriately. Trustees make sure that all appropriate checks are in place on adults who are regularly in the school. There is family support provision across the multi-academy trust and parents appreciate this work to help them, as well as their children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum has a clear and ambitious intent. However, the implementation of this is only at a very early stage in subjects other than English and mathematics. Pupils are not yet able to recall and apply knowledge and vocabulary from previous topics to a high-enough standard. This curriculum needs to be embedded. Leaders need to establish effective systems to check how well the curriculum is taught in all classes, and review where needed.

- Children's learning in Reception is not currently as well sequenced as it should be. There needs to be more opportunities for writing. The new curriculum needs to be embedded, including linking opportunities for writing into the new topics.
- In the early years, there is a recently developed outside area that strongly encourages physical play but there are other areas where it is not as clear to children what they could be used for. These outside areas need reviewing. Children need to know what they could do with the different resources.
- Some teaching of mathematics does not make use of as many ways of representing problems as leaders expect. Also, pupils find it hard to explain their ideas in written form. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the confidence and skills to deliver high-quality mathematics teaching.
- Pupils said they would like to borrow more books from the library. They are allowed to but further encouragement of this is needed to enhance a love of reading, particularly for pupils who are at an earlier stage on the reading scheme.

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 the school and 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	144021
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10121341
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Karl Jermyn
Headteacher	Nikki Taylor
Website	www.blenheimpark.norfolk.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy

Information about this school

- Blenheim Park Academy converted to become an academy on 1 March 2017. When its predecessor school, Blenheim Park Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- The school is part of the Ad Meliora multi-academy trust, which consists of three schools. The schools within the trust are led by the chief executive headteacher.
- The trustees have decided to form a local governing board for the school. At the time of inspection, this group had not yet had its first meeting. Previous oversight was directly from trustees.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A separately run and registered playgroup operates on the school site.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- We spoke to the headteacher, all the teaching staff, members of support staff and leaders from the multi-academy trust. We met with the chief executive headteacher and trustees.
- We spoke to pupils in lessons, out of lessons and on the playground. We visited an assembly and spoke to parents.
- We did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. These deep dives included discussions with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. We looked at pupils' work and visited lessons.
- To inspect safeguarding, we scrutinised the school's single central record and spoke to a wide range of staff, pupils and parents. We looked at a range of safeguarding records.

Inspection team

Tessa Holledge, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Brenda Watson

Ofsted Inspector

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