

Inspection of a good school: Blakeley Heath Primary School

Sytch Lane, Wombourne, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV5 0JR

Inspection dates: 11–12 March 2020

Outcome

Blakeley Heath Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The new headteacher has improved this school since starting her role 18 months ago. For example, she has restructured the senior leadership team and introduced a new, more effective curriculum.

Staff, pupils and governors refer to their school as the 'Blakeley Heath Family'. Pupils describe teachers as caring, helpful and friendly. Positive relationships and strong values permeate the school. All staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and academic achievement. Pupils work hard and regularly meet these expectations.

Pupils are happy, polite and welcoming, and they speak with pride about their school. They get on well with each other and adults. Pupils' behaviour is good. Lessons happen free from disruptions. Pupils are not worried about bullying. They have every confidence in adults to address any incidents that may happen.

Leaders have worked hard to underpin the curriculum with a wide range of activities, to bring learning to life outside of the classroom. Pupils benefit from extra-curricular clubs, author visits and trips to London theatre shows, for example Aladdin. Pupils go on many trips to local and regional places of interest, such as places of worship. Pupils speak passionately about their residential trip to Ingestre Hall, for instance.

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

The headteacher has worked hard to improve standards at the school since her appointment in September 2018. Now, there is a new curriculum in place that ensures that pupils learn in a wide range of subjects. Leaders want every pupil to achieve their best. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Senior leaders, together with subject leaders, have carefully thought about what pupils need to learn over time in each subject. They have created knowledge and skills overviews that help teachers to plan their lessons in the medium and long term. Teachers choose resources carefully.

Reading is a priority at the school. The plans in reading are sequenced well and focus on pupils' phonetic ability. This helps teachers to know what skills pupils should gain to become fluent readers. There is a strong focus on reading skills, for example inference and prediction, throughout subject plans. Staff quickly spot any pupils who may need extra help. These pupils then receive targeted support to catch up.

Subject plans set out the skills and knowledge pupils need to learn to be successful. The quality and rigour of some plans are better than in others. This is due to some subject leaders being new to their role. These subject leaders have not had specific training to ensure that all plans are of the same high quality.

Teachers have good subject knowledge. They know what they need to do to support pupils with SEND. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They give pupils time to recap on their learning from previous lessons. Pupils apply their earlier learning in new topics. However, this is not always consistent. Some pupils in Year 6 have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders know this and have plans in place to close these gaps.

Assessments in some core subjects, for example mathematics, check what pupils can recall from a previous lesson. Pupils also undertake additional assessments each half term. At times, these assessments check recall of simple facts or words, but not what pupils have learned and can remember over a long period of time. These tests add considerably to teachers' workload.

Leaders plan well to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils have many opportunities to discuss topical issues. These include how to keep themselves safe online and what it means to be a citizen in Britain. For instance, pupils talked about how they learned about democracy during the school council elections. This helps them to be well prepared for life in modern Britain. Pupils enjoy the many extra-curricular activities on offer. Many pupils take part in sport clubs and competitions, for example.

Children in Reception settle very well in school. Children are happy and safe. Adults model language and behaviours extremely well. This ensures that children develop not only academic but interpersonal skills quickly. Children enjoy time to learn and play in their own classroom and in outside spaces. The range of activities provided encourage children to explore and be curious. Children in the nursery setting begin to learn about the sounds letters make. Variation in the subject knowledge of some staff means that this is not consistent. Consequently, some children do not start to learn phonics as early as they could. Leaders have recognised this, and plans are in place to strengthen the provision.

In discussion with the headteacher, we agreed that the effective use of assessments and appropriate staff training may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Adults work together to create a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff understand their duties around ensuring that everyone at the school is well looked after and safe. Leaders

ensure that all staff have the training they need to spot if a child may need help. Teachers know the processes they should follow if they have a concern about a pupil. Staff know their pupils and the pupils' families. Senior leaders work tenaciously with outside agencies to provide any help that is needed.

Senior leaders complete all relevant checks on adults working at the school. They keep accurate records of the checks they complete.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are new to their posts and have not yet had the necessary training to understand all areas of their roles. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in the quality and rigour of some subject plans. Leaders need to ensure that all staff have the necessary training to hone their skills so that they can fulfil their duties effectively.
- Some assessments are not effective ways of informing teachers and, therefore, teaching of what pupils have learned and can do over a period of time. Pupils complete many assessments that check recall of simple facts or words that have recently been taught or covered. Leaders need to make sure that assessments are effective in checking how well pupils have learned so that they can apply their knowledge in future topics. Leaders need to ensure that assessments are not burdensome on staff workload.

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 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 section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 10–11 May 2016.

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	124192
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10122574
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	318
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Owen
Headteacher	Laura Richards
Website	www.blakeleyheath.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her post in September 2018. She was previously the deputy headteacher at this school. In recent months, the school's senior leadership has been restructured to provide additional capacity.
- The school makes no alternative provision for any of its pupils.

Information about this inspection

- I met with senior leaders, including the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a range of subject leaders and teachers. I met with 6 members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- I scrutinised the school's safeguarding arrangements and documentation, including the single central record. I met with the designated safeguarding lead. I scrutinised files and safeguarding records. I spoke with staff and children about safeguarding.
- I visited the school's early years provision.
- I completed various inspection activities to gather evidence about the quality of education. There was a focus on reading, mathematics and French. This included

lesson visits, looking at pupils' work and discussions with teachers and pupils about their learning. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.

- I met with two groups of most-able pupils from Years 5 and 6 to discuss their work in a wide range of subjects across the curriculum.
- I observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. I gathered many pupils' views about their school.
- I listened to pupils read.
- I considered 83 parents' responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 50 free-text responses. I considered 27 responses from staff to the online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Bianka Zemke, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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