

Inspection of a good school: The Ferns Primary Academy

Plodder Lane, Farnworth, Bolton, Lancashire, BL4 0DA

Inspection dates:

30 June and 1 July 2021

Outcome

The Ferns Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The Ferns Primary Academy is a vibrant place for pupils to learn and thrive. Leaders have created a safe haven for pupils where they can be unique and follow their passions. Everyone is welcomed.

Pupils, staff and families are proud of the school. Pupils said that the school is 'the best'. Parents and carers agree. Pupils are happy and feel safe because staff look after them and care about what they have to say. Staff act quickly to protect pupils from bullying.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils. Pupils try hard to live up to these. In and around school, they behave well. Pupils have lots of friends. They enjoy playing games together and going into the woodland to make dens, toast marshmallows and learn more about nature.

Pupils have many roles of responsibility which help prepare them for the future. They enjoy being on the leadership council and wearing 'the purple jumper' in Year 6. Pupils enjoy how they can help others in these roles.

Pupils value their education and are keen to achieve. They understand how a good education will help them to achieve their goals in life. Pupils have high aspirations for the future.

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

Leaders and staff are highly ambitious in their work to provide the best for all pupils so that they achieve as well as possible. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have designed an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum that offers all pupils a wide range of opportunities. Leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge

that they intend pupils to learn and remember. They have also ensured that the curriculum builds pupils' learning in a logical way. Across the curriculum, teachers plan activities for pupils to build on what they have learned. The early years establishes the building blocks to prepare pupils for the key stage 1 curriculum.

Leaders have recently implemented a new curriculum for religious education. The curriculum plans ensure that pupils learn about different faiths and cultures in a progressive way. However, due to the reordered content within the plans, some pupils now have gaps in their learning. As a result, pupils do not have a strong knowledge and understanding of different religions and cultures.

Leaders have put reading at the forefront of the curriculum. At the start of the Reception Year, children are taught phonics. The school's phonics programme is well structured and systematic. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They use this well to plan activities to meet pupils' individual needs. Teachers select reading books that are matched to pupils' abilities. This enables pupils to practise their reading skills well. Pupils' progress in phonics is regularly checked. Support is put in place quickly if pupils need to catch up. As a result, pupils achieve well. Across the school, a love of reading is fostered through the well-resourced libraries. Leaders have created a 'land of discovery' for pupils. In this land, pupils can decide which area they want to visit, such as the 'forbidden forest', where they can read carefully selected books. Pupils love reading at The Ferns.

Leaders have made sure that the mathematics curriculum enables pupils to achieve well. Staff have strong subject knowledge. They plan learning carefully. Staff consider the best ways to help pupils with SEND and other pupils who find aspects of mathematics difficult.

Children flourish in the early years. They settle quickly because of the caring, supportive relationships that they have with staff. Leaders' expectations of learning and behaviour are well established. Children and pupils behave well and want to learn. This means that there is little disruption to learning.

Pupils have many opportunities to enhance their personal development throughout the curriculum. They learn about diversity and understand that respect for other people is important.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They feel valued and respected because leaders always have time to listen to them. Staff said that leaders consider the impact of school improvement initiatives on their work-life balance and well-being.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture of heightened awareness of all safeguarding matters. They know the local community well and the risks that their pupils may face. They use this information to provide training for all staff. This ensures that staff can carry out their roles effectively. Staff have established strong relationships with families. They act quickly to make sure that vulnerable pupils and their families get the help that they need. The

curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe in their community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils have a limited knowledge of other faiths and cultures. As a result, they are unable to discuss and understand beliefs that are different to their own. Leaders should ensure that pupils develop their understanding of different faiths and cultures so that they are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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 outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 8 and 9 June 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 [here](#).

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	138399
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10193964
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	446
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Steven Dale
Principal	Danielle Broadbent (Principal), James Howard (Executive Principal)
Website	https://tfa.northerneducationtrust.org/
Date of previous inspection	8-9 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new executive principal, principal and vice principal have been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive principal, principal, vice principal, business manager, and the welfare and attendance officer.
- Inspectors also spoke with a group of governors and a trustee. Inspectors spoke with the deputy chief executive officer for the trust.
- Inspectors considered a range of safeguarding documents, including the school's central record of staff and visitors, records of safeguarding and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and geography. They talked with leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 29 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 29 free-text responses from parents to find out their views on the school. They also considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 54 responses to the pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Maria McGarry

Ofsted Inspector

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