

Inspection of an outstanding school: Luddendenfoot Academy

Burnley Road, Luddendenfoot, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX2 6AU

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring, nurturing school. It is built on respectful relationships between staff and pupils. An atmosphere of warmth and high expectations permeates the school.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know that if they are worried about anything, an adult will listen to them, take them seriously, and help them. Pupils, and staff, do not think that bullying is a problem in school.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They listen with politeness and respect when staff speak to them. In lessons, they listen with consideration and good manners when other pupils are speaking. There are no raised voices in school.

Staff have high expectations for all pupils, whatever the pupils' starting points. As a result, pupils work hard and want to learn. They want to do as well as they can. Pupils have fully bought into the school's focus on 'reading 4 pleasure' at the end of each day, for example. The curriculum has many strengths, but in some respects could be stronger.

Pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the school. Staff are interested in what pupils think, and what they care about. For example, the school council's and head girl's suggestions led to the recently introduced 'mental health Mondays'.

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

Leaders have put in place a detailed curriculum for a wide range of subjects. All subject plans are based on the national curriculum. Leaders have organised subject plans into half termly 'themes' for each year group. Plans are, for the most part, organised into sequenced schemes of work so that pupils' knowledge builds over time. In mathematics,

for example, leaders have thought carefully about which mathematical concepts to teach and when. This includes the early years, where children were learning about shape. In art, from the early years onwards, pupils learn about artists, art movements and art skills, such as surrealism and the work of Paul Nash. A new geography curriculum is currently being written.

While subject plans are mostly coherently sequenced, this is not always the case. In history, for instance, pupils learn about the history of the British Isles in a non-chronological order. This is because leaders' thematic curriculum is based on the order of science topics, so the history curriculum has to fit with the science curriculum. This does not support pupils' learning of history as a coherent, chronological story.

Leaders' subject plans diligently set out the skills which pupils should learn so that they know how to think, for example, like a scientist or historian. At present, though, subject plans do not consistently stipulate which skills should be taught and when. As a result, pupils do not systematically acquire such skills in a planned, logical order across their subjects. There is a risk that some skills will not build up in a planned sequence, be missed out entirely, or be taught too much or too little.

Leaders have placed a high priority on reading. They have made substantial investment in resources, so that books and reading areas in classrooms and around school are of a high quality. Leaders have ensured that books for early reading match the school's chosen phonics scheme. Pupils seen during the inspection love reading. There is some strong and effective phonics teaching in the early years and key stage 1, including for those pupils who need extra help.

However, for some of the very weakest readers, phonics teaching is not uniformly strong. Books do not always match phonics ability, because the assessment of pupils' reading skills is not consistently accurate.

Pupils' behaviour, as seen during the inspection, is exemplary. It is founded on mutual respect between staff and pupils.

The wider curriculum, for pupils' personal development, provides a rich range of learning opportunities. This includes, for instance, inviting visitors into school such as the emergency and public services. Leaders have taken steps to make sure that some speakers are strong female role models.

The school is well led. Staff feel supported by leaders. They value the headteacher's concern for their well-being and consideration of their workload. Leaders' motivation is to do the right thing for the pupils. Governors and new trust leaders are equally committed to the school. They know that the current governance structure needs changing and there are imminent plans to do so.

In discussion with the headteacher and trust leaders, the inspector agreed that the following areas may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection: further supporting the weakest readers with their phonics; implementing the new geography curriculum; reviewing the sequencing of some curriculum content; ensuring that some subjects'

disciplinary skills are made clearer in curriculum plans; and making the planned changes to governance arrangements.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have a clear understanding of what they need to do to identify when pupils might be in need of help, and they have ensured that staff are trained in the signs to look out for. Leaders' processes for contacting, and working with, other agencies such as the local authority's children's services, are robust. Leaders and staff keep a close eye on those pupils who are receiving help.

Pupils feel safe in school, partly because they appreciate the school's procedures for dealing with safeguarding incidents, such as fire alarms or intruder alerts.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some effective teaching of phonics in school. However, for some of the very weakest readers, it is not as effective as it needs to be. These pupils struggle to decode words containing sounds they have previously been taught, and their phonics books are not tightly matched to their phonics ability. This suggests that the assessment of pupils' reading skills is not consistently accurate. Leaders should review their strategies for teaching the very weakest readers so that these pupils are fully supported in their reading.
- Leaders have carefully built a thematic-based curriculum which has breadth and balance, and is based closely on the national curriculum. However, at times, the sequencing of some subject content is not as helpful to pupils' learning as it could be, such as in history. This is because leaders have chosen to make science the 'lead' subject in all themes across all years, so most content in every subject is required to 'fit' behind science, within the themes. Leaders should review their subject plans, to check that all content and skills are sequenced coherently for the subject, and are not made less coherent due to having to align behind the science curriculum.
- The subject disciplinary skills in some subjects are not clearly mapped out against any particular tasks or activities within subject plans. In science, for example, the national curriculum skills of 'working scientifically' are listed, but it is for teachers to decide which ones they teach, and when. Similarly, in history, the skills of applying historical methods are not made explicit enough within subject plans. As a result, pupils do not acquire such skills coherently, and there is a risk of some skills being omitted entirely, or of being over- or under-taught. Leaders should review their subject plans to ensure that subject disciplinary skills are clearly and sequentially mapped out.
- Leaders are currently working on a new geography curriculum. At the moment, a 'legacy' geography curriculum is in place. Leaders' intention is to complete the new

geography curriculum as a matter of urgency and introduce it as soon as possible. Leaders should proceed with this plan.

- At the point of inspection, the governing body does not have a composition which will enable it to carry out its role in holding leaders to account effectively. The chair of governors and the new trust's chief executive officer (CEO) are aware of this and a plan to address it is in place. It is expected that the necessary changes will be made in the days following the inspection. The trust should ensure that this is the case.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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	137699
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10199483
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	189
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marie Briggs
Headteacher	Caroline Greenwood
Website	http://www.luddendenfoot.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	10–11 December 2015, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. She took up her role in September 2021, having previously been the deputy headteacher.
- The school joined Polaris Multi Academy Trust (MAT) on 1 November 2021.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, the director of primary of Polaris MAT, and senior leaders with responsibility for the curriculum.
- The inspector met the CEO of Polaris MAT, the chair of governors and one other governor.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum

plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including science, geography and history.
- To evaluate the school's safeguarding processes and culture, the inspector scrutinised records of the checks carried out on staff who work at the school. The inspector discussed the school's systems for safeguarding with the headteacher, senior staff from the MAT, and several staff from a range of roles in the school.
- The inspector took into account the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents, and 10 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Steve Shaw, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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