

# Inspection of a good school: Batchley First and Nursery School

Cherry Tree Walk, Batchley, Redditch, West Midlands B97 6PD

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Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

## **Outcome**

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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?**

Since her appointment, the headteacher has set a clear and ambitious vision. Effective help has been provided by the local authority and its commissioning of support from an academy trust to support leaders and staff in improving aspects that had slipped. This includes in mathematics and in staff expectations of what pupils know and can do.

Pupils are happy and feel safe at school. They are well cared for and work and play together cheerfully. Leaders want the best for pupils. They have reviewed the curriculum, but know that greater clarity is needed in specifying the content in some subjects.

The headteacher has revised the behaviour policy and taken a firm stance on dealing with aggressive behaviour. Consequently, behaviour has improved. Most pupils behave well in and around school. Pupils know what bullying is and how important it is to report this. Leaders take effective action to deal with bullying.

The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), both in the resource units and in school, is of good quality. Staff are also mindful of pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties. The school rabbit and pet guinea pigs are popular with pupils and help calm them down when they are upset or anxious.

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

The school is expertly and calmly led by the headteacher. She places pupils at the centre of all decisions made. A focus on raising standards is crystal clear.

Subject leaders are committed and knowledgeable. However, some have had limited training or opportunity to check how well pupils are achieving. This means that they cannot identify where weaknesses exist and improvement is needed.

Planning in mathematics is effective. Teachers know what they want pupils to learn and in what order. Resources are used well to support pupils in lessons. Early mathematics is prioritised in early years. Staff in Nursery help children to recognise and practise writing numbers up to five. Reception class staff build on this successfully. Lots of counting rhymes and activities get children off to a strong start.

Leaders understand the importance of reading. Pupils enjoy reading and most read regularly. Impressively, pupils have written, and had published, their own school book. Phonics is taught from day one in Reception Year. Children have books that match their abilities. However, too many pupils in key stage 1 have not mastered the skills needed in early reading. This is because their attendance is low and they do not receive enough support to help them catch up quickly when they are in school.

Staff assess pupils regularly in English and mathematics. They know how well pupils are doing. Curriculum plans in other subjects set out the vocabulary and skills pupils will learn. However, the subject content that teachers want pupils to know and remember is not clear. Teachers cannot check well enough how pupils are doing. As a result, pupils only gain a loose understanding in some subjects. They struggle to recall key information and basic facts.

Staff expectations of what pupils can do are too low. For example, staff do not insist on high standards of presentation. Pupils often are given low-level tasks to complete that do not help them to know and remember more. Pupils are not encouraged to be independent or to develop their writing in the wider curriculum.

Provision for pupils in the pre-school and language unit is effective. Adults have a clear grasp of pupils' needs. Specialist support enables pupils to make good progress. There is also good support for pupils with SEND in all classes. Pupils have individual plans and receive regular short bursts of additional adult help in the afternoons. This helps these pupils achieve well.

Governors, staff, parents and carers, and pupils all agree that behaviour has improved. While the school still has a few occurrences of challenging behaviour, the number of serious incidents has reduced. Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving. As a result, there is less disruption in lessons.

Leaders are working hard to improve attendance. The services of an attendance officer are commissioned to work with families whose children are persistently absent. Nevertheless, there are some pupils with very low attendance. This has a negative impact on their achievement and they lack the skills needed to be successful at school and in life.

Leaders cater well for pupils' personal development. A range of sporting and cultural opportunities help widen pupils' interests and add to their enjoyment of school. Pupils' social and emotional development is taken seriously. Each day, staff identify pupils who appear angry, upset or unusually quiet. Nurture group and pet therapy help pupils calm down and talk to staff about their anxieties.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that the wider curriculum, subject leadership, reading support for the lowest ability pupils, staff expectations and attendance may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding pupils is at the heart of leaders' work. They have successfully implemented robust safeguarding procedures to keep pupils as safe as possible. All staff receive regular training and are vigilant for signs of potential neglect or abuse. Staff report any concerns immediately. Leaders follow up these concerns quickly and effectively. Leaders work closely with families and other professionals to provide support where needed.

Important safety messages are taught through the curriculum. Pupils learn about water safety due to the nearby pond. Pupils feel confident to share any concerns with a trusted adult. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Some subject leaders have had limited opportunities to monitor and evaluate their subjects. This reduces their ability to challenge and support staff, determine what is working well, and identify where further improvements are needed. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders have the training and skills needed to lead their subjects effectively and have a positive impact on pupils' learning.
- Planning in the foundation subjects does not focus sharply enough on what teachers want pupils to know and remember. As a result, pupils are unclear about what they are learning and are unable to retain and recall key information. Leaders should ensure that subject knowledge is identified and recorded clearly in subject plans. These plans should be implemented well, and assessed appropriately to check that pupils have committed key information to long-term memory.
- Too many of the pupils with the lowest reading skills in key stage 1 are persistently absent. As a result, they have significant gaps in their phonic knowledge and are unable to decode and blend as well as they should for their age. This is a major barrier to them learning to read. Staff do not provide sufficient additional support for these pupils when they are in school to address gaps in pupils' knowledge. Leaders should ensure that these pupils receive effective support to help them catch up with their peers.
- Staff expectations are not high enough to raise pupils' achievement in all subjects and embed key knowledge. This limits pupils' progress and restricts their ability to demonstrate what they know and can do in different subjects. Leaders should ensure that staff challenge and expect more of pupils in all subjects.

- Too many pupils continue to be persistently absent. As a result, they miss vital lessons. This impedes their progress. Leaders should take further steps to work with parents to instil the importance of regular school attendance.

## 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, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. 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 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 in 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	116721
<b>Local authority</b>	Worcestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199780
<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	344
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mercia Lee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Sarah Downes
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.batchleyfirstschool.co.uk">www.batchleyfirstschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 and 20 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school continues to have two specialist provision bases funded by the local authority on site. A Nursery Plus unit caters for pre-school children with SEND from across the Redditch area. A speech and language unit caters for children with speech and language difficulties.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 her evaluation.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, subject leaders and members of staff. The inspector held meetings with a representative of the local authority and three members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. Inspection activities in these subjects included lesson visits, discussion with staff and pupils, meeting with subject leaders, and work scrutiny. The inspector also observed pupils reading.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. The inspector also looked at an external report about the effectiveness of governance. Records of behaviour, attendance and safeguarding were also checked.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspector considered the school's procedures for recruiting staff, the quality of staff training and the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at playtime and around school. She talked to groups of pupils about behaviour, bullying and well-being.
- The inspector talked to parents at the end of the school day. She considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and their free-text responses. She also reviewed the responses to the school's own staff questionnaire and gathered the views of staff and pupils on site through discussion with these groups.

### **Inspection team**

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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