

Inspection of a good school: Blackfell Primary School

Knoulberry, Blackfell, Washington, Tyne and Wear NE37 1HA

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 November 2021

Outcome

Blackfell Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Blackfell Primary School is a very happy, caring and supportive place for pupils to learn. Pupils value the strong relationships they form with their teachers. Pupils are proud of their school. They say that they enjoy coming to school and appreciate how their teachers help them.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils. They offer them a challenging and interesting curriculum. Teachers select topics that really engage and interest pupils in their learning. In lessons, pupils are challenged to think. This helps them to achieve highly.

Leaders support pupils to become responsible and respectful members of the community. During the COVID-19 pandemic, pupils wrote letters to local care homes and collected food for a local food bank.

Pupils enjoy the positions of responsibility they hold. They enjoy being a buddy reader to younger pupils, a playground paramedic, or a member of the anti-bullying group. Pupils access a wealth of after-school activities, including archery, dance and being part of the school rock band. This helps to improve pupils' independence, social skills and self-confidence.

Pupils are polite and well-mannered. They believe behaviour in school is good and the inspector agrees. Pupils are confident that if bullying did occur it would be dealt with very quickly by any member of staff. Pupils feel safe. They say that staff always have time to listen to them.

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

Leaders have created a broad and ambitious curriculum that sets out clearly what pupils should learn and when. The curriculum enables all pupils to succeed, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). It prepares them well for the next stage in their education. Reading is a focus of leaders' work. This can be seen in the

displays around school, books in class libraries and the high-quality texts used across the curriculum. Regular story times help pupils develop an enthusiasm for reading. One pupil told inspectors, 'Books can take you to places you might never be able to go to yourself.'

There is a consistent approach to teaching phonics. Leaders have high expectations of the phonic knowledge pupils will acquire at key points from Reception to Year 2. Staff in the early years support children to take part in activities such as rhymes and stories. Teachers ensure that the books pupils' read match the sounds that they know. They make regular checks on the sounds pupils are learning. Older pupils receive the help they need from well-trained staff. This helps them to catch up quickly. Pupils read texts with increasing confidence as they move through the school. They are keen to talk about the books they have enjoyed.

The mathematics curriculum is clearly sequenced. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to revisit what they have learned before. This is helping pupils to remember more. Leaders have made the development of pupils' mathematical vocabulary a priority. Pupils now use mathematical vocabulary with accuracy. For example, pupils in Year 6 accurately used numerator and denominator when explaining mixed fractions. In the early years, mathematics is prioritised. Daily 'carpet time' is used to teach children mathematical concepts.

Curriculum plans for other subjects, such as history and art, are well sequenced. It is clear what knowledge and skills will be taught. Subject leaders have made sure that their plans cover the breadth and depth of the national curriculum and meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND. They are suitably aspirational. Teachers help pupils to see connections between their learning. In art, for example, pupils in Year 3 have used their knowledge about materials to produce sculptures that are linked to the outside environment. In some subjects, teachers use regular assessments to check what pupils can remember. This is not consistent in all areas of the curriculum. Subject leaders are exploring ways to check what pupils know and remember in other subjects. This work is at an early stage.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are promoted through curriculum activities. Staff encourage all pupils to take part in extra-curricular clubs. Educational visits and visitors to school enrich the curriculum. They give pupils new experiences, such as taking part in anti-bullying conferences where pupils can share their ideas.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Adults ensure rules are fair and consistent. Pupils work hard in their lessons. Children in the early years listen attentively and engage in their learning. Pupils work and play very happily together.

Staff are appreciative of the support that they receive from leaders and governors. They value the actions taken by leaders that have had a positive impact on their well-being and workload. Staff say that they are very proud to be a member of the Blackfell family.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a priority. Staff have a very good knowledge of families and the local community. They understand the dangers and challenges that pupils may face. Staff use this knowledge, alongside regular training, to keep pupils safe. They understand what to do if they have any concerns about pupils' well-being.

Leaders work with a range of outside agencies to keep pupils safe. Referrals are made quickly to ensure that pupils and families receive the support that they need.

The curriculum gives pupils many opportunities to learn how to stay safe.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The approaches that leaders use to assess pupils' learning across the curriculum are inconsistent. This means that teachers do not accurately capture what pupils know and can do in all subjects. Leaders should ensure that approaches to assessment are improved so that teachers are clear on what pupils have learned and what needs revisiting.

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, 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 second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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	108833
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10200336
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	191
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Angela Star
Headteacher	Julia Watkins
Website	www.blackfell.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is an on-site breakfast club managed by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, history and art. This involved visiting lessons, looking at pupils' work, meeting with subject leaders and speaking to pupils and teachers. The inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector talked with pupils about the books they liked to read.
- The inspector held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. She met with the school's improvement partner and four governors including the chair of governors.

- The inspector monitored pupils' behaviour around school, at breaktimes and during lessons. She also met with groups of pupils to hear their views about their work and school life.
- The inspector scrutinised behaviour records, including records relating to bullying incidents.
- The inspector reviewed the school's self-evaluation and the leader's plans for improvement.
- The inspector considered the 37 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 24 free-text responses. The inspector considered the 20 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector examined information about safeguarding and met with the safeguarding team.

Inspection team

Anne Vernon, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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