

Inspection of a good school: Netherbrook Primary School

Chester Road, Netherton, Dudley DY2 9RZ

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 March 2022

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?

Netherbrook Primary is a warm and friendly school at the heart of its community. Pupils are polite and respectful and conduct themselves well in and around the school. They enjoy school and feel safe. Pupils know that adults care about them and look after them well.

Leaders have high expectations of pupils. They encourage pupils to persevere and try their best at all times. Pupils present their work neatly and readily help their classmates if they are stuck.

Pupils behave well in lessons and move around school quietly and sensibly. They regularly hold doors open for other pupils, staff and visitors. They understand different forms of bullying and discrimination. They know who to report this to if it ever happens. Leaders respond quickly and effectively to pupils' concerns.

Leaders place a strong focus on reading and mathematics. However, some pupils do not develop the skills needed to become fluent and competent readers. Others have gaps in their mathematical and scientific understanding. This means that some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Parents have nothing but praise for the school. They appreciate the help and support staff and leaders provide, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

The school has been through a difficult time in the last few years due to turbulence and disruption caused at trust level. This restricted the leadership team from taking the action

it had identified until recently. However, these issues have been resolved and the school is now moving forward at pace.

Leaders have recently redesigned their curriculum. This is at an early stage of implementation. Content is well sequenced and matches the expectations of the national curriculum. However, its implementation is inconsistent across the school. Pupils also have some gaps in their knowledge and skills in some subjects, such as science. This means that sometimes, pupils do not have the foundation knowledge they need to build on to be successful. Some of these issues have not been picked up as subject leaders have not yet had enough opportunity to check for strengths and weaknesses in their areas.

Leaders promote reading well and celebrate pupils' success on the 'reading rainbow'. Leaders have invested in a new phonics programme. This provides a helpful structure for staff and ensures that reading books reinforce the sounds and letters pupils learn. However, staff do not hear lower attaining pupils read frequently enough for them to become confident and fluent readers. Additionally, staff in Reception Year do not ensure that any missed phonics work, due to absence, is covered with children on their return. As a result, some children do not get off to a strong start in reading and begin to fall behind.

The mathematics curriculum is well sequenced. Children in the early years make a good start in learning about numbers. This emphasis on number continues across the school. However, less focus is placed on other areas of mathematics, such as shape and measurement. Pupils also struggle to solve problems or explain their answers as they do not practise them very often. This means pupils' skills in these areas are less well developed.

The school is highly inclusive. Leaders ensure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are identified early and their needs are managed well. Pupils receive strong support from staff and specialist professionals. The leader for SEND carefully checks on provision and the progress pupils make. All pupils have individual plans which set out clear targets for development. These help pupils to achieve well.

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and even the youngest children show high levels of resilience. Pupils are focused during lessons and behave well. Disruption to learning is rare because staff manage behaviour effectively.

The school is well regarded for its promotion of sports and performing arts. Pupils develop their personal interests through participation in a wide range of clubs and school events. Visits and visitors also enrich the curriculum. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' mental well-being and has achieved an award that recognises this work. A strong focus on equality and diversity is central to and threaded across the curriculum.

Leaders and governors have worked hard to maintain stability and morale through the turbulence of recent years. They are considerate and supportive of staff's workload and well-being. They have shown high levels of determination and resolve to improve the life chances and education of all pupils. They are firmly back on track.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that reading, mathematics, curriculum implementation and subject leadership may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are well trained and understand their roles in keeping pupils safe. Leaders complete the required checks on all adults who work in the school. Leaders have positive relationships with pupils and their families. They know them well and support them when necessary. Leaders work effectively with the local authority and other agencies. They ensure that pupils at risk get the help they need quickly.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through lessons and in assemblies. They know who they can talk to if they feel unsafe, including school staff or by contacting Childline.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The redesigned curriculum is at an early stage of implementation. There are some inconsistencies in how content is delivered. Pupils also have gaps in their knowledge. Leaders should ensure that staff check pupils' prior knowledge in order to make sure pupils build their learning sequentially and effectively.
- Subject leaders have had limited opportunity to check the consistency and effectiveness of the implementation and impact of the curriculum. This limits their ability to provide support where needed to raise outcomes. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders have the time and expertise needed to monitor their areas effectively.
- Staff do not provide sufficient support in phonics for children who are persistently absent in Reception Year or pupils who have lower attainment in reading. As a result, these pupils fall behind their peers. Leaders should ensure that pupils receive the support needed to become confident and fluent readers.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils cover a sufficiently broad range of mathematical topics during the year. As a result, pupils have weak knowledge and skills in aspects such as shape and measurement and problem-solving. Leaders should ensure the curriculum incorporates a broad range of mathematical disciplines and that pupils develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills to apply their learning fully.

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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 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	144079
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10212339
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	504
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Pam Garrington
Headteacher	Phil Rawlings
Website	www.netherbrook.dudley.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 and 27 February 2015

Information about this school

- The school joined the Learning Link Multi-Academy Trust in April 2017. The school is due to join the Elliot Foundation Multi-Academy Trust in the near future.
- The school opened provision for two-year-olds in February 2018.
- 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 leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders, two representatives from the trust, including the interim chief executive officer, and two governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and science. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at work in pupils' books.

- The inspector met with all teaching staff to talk about curriculum, workload and the behaviour and personal development of pupils. She also met with groups of pupils to talk about their learning.
- The inspector looked at curriculum plans and observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to staff.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record and spoke to the headteacher about safeguarding procedures. A selection of safeguarding records was examined.
- The inspector considered a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and plans for improvement. Records of attendance and suspensions were checked.
- The inspector talked to pupils about behaviour, bullying and welfare.
- The inspector talked to parents at the end of the school day and considered the responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and their free-text responses. She gathered the views of pupils and staff on site through discussion with these groups and from their online questionnaire responses.

Inspection team

Heather Simpson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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