

Inspection of Little Lever School

Church Street, Little Lever, Bolton, Greater Manchester BL3 1BT

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 March 2022

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are highly ambitious for all pupils. Their vision is that 'all pupils achieve things they never thought they could'. Pupils are rising to this challenge. By the time they leave school, pupils achieve well in a range of academic and vocational subjects. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Pupils feel safe and happy in school. They behave well in lessons and around school. Relationships between pupils and staff are strong. Pupils said that they can approach staff about any worries. They trust staff to sort issues out. Pupils reported that if bullying does occur, staff deal with it quickly and effectively.

Leaders are developing an increasing number of activities for pupils to develop their skills, aptitudes and interests. Pupils enjoy the range of school clubs on offer, including numerous sports and performance opportunities. They particularly enjoy representing the school in local debating team competitions. Pupils spoke positively about the National Citizen Service and Youth Parliament.

Parents and carers are very supportive of the school. A typical comment was, 'Staff go above and beyond to help my child.'

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

Leaders, together with trustees and staff, have worked together to improve the school since the previous inspection. Staff are keen to develop and embrace new ideas. Their morale is high. Staff appreciate leaders' strategies to consider their well-being and reduce their workload.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They have adjusted this curriculum appropriately to address gaps in pupils' learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders are working creatively to increase the proportion of pupils who study the English Baccalaureate suite of subjects, including a modern foreign language.

In most subjects, leaders know what they want pupils to learn as they move through the school. Pupils are able to build their knowledge and understanding over time. This ensures that they achieve well. However, in a small number of subjects, particularly in key stage 3, leaders have not identified the knowledge that pupils must learn clearly enough. This means that teachers are unclear about the essential knowledge pupils need to know. This hinders pupils' progress. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in these subjects.

Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They receive high-quality training and time to work collaboratively with others to hone their delivery of the subject curriculums.

Teachers use a range of assessment methods effectively to check pupils' understanding. They use assessment information well to tackle misconceptions, so that pupils are ready for the new learning.

Leaders provide pupils who struggle to read with extra support. This helps them to catch up with their reading knowledge. Leaders have invested heavily in a whole-school reading strategy. This is underpinned by a new library that sits at the heart of the school. However, leaders' plans to foster pupils' love of reading are not bearing enough total fruition across the school.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can access all curriculum subjects. Pupils with SEND have their needs identified quickly and accurately. They are supported effectively by well-informed teachers and teaching assistants.

Leaders have developed clear expectations and policies around behaviour. These are understood and followed by teachers and pupils. Those pupils who need specific help to manage their behaviour receive effective support from a dedicated pastoral team.

Pupils follow a well-planned personal development curriculum. They learn about the rule of law, democracy and respect for views that are different from their own. Pupils benefit from a high-quality careers programme. Speakers visit the school to highlight career paths. This helps to broaden pupils' ambitions and encourages them to aim high. Pupils are well equipped to make informed choices about their next steps.

Trustees provide highly effective support and challenge to leaders. Trustees are clear about the school's priorities and carry out all of their statutory duties well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders, including trustees, provide staff with a full and timely range of safeguarding training. Staff are well trained in the use of the school's safeguarding systems. They know how to pass on concerns to leaders. Leaders deal with any concerns quickly. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to keep vulnerable pupils safe.

Leaders have provided pupils with clear information about the impact of sexual harassment. This helps pupils to gain a better understanding of this important issue.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, subject leaders have not clearly identified the knowledge that they want pupils to learn. This means that teachers do not have the information that they need about what should be taught. This hinders pupils' learning. Leaders should ensure that remaining subject areas are well designed and sequenced so that pupils can learn effectively.
- Leaders' plans to promote a love of reading among pupils are not fully in place across all subject departments. This means that, in some subjects, pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to extend their reading knowledge and experience the benefits of reading for pleasure. Leaders should ensure that their plans are adopted consistently across the school so that reading becomes a shared priority for everyone.

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

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| Unique reference number | 142296 |
| Local authority | Bolton |
| Inspection number | 10216070 |
| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Academy converter |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1045 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Karina Carter |
| Headteacher | Dominic McKeon |
| Website | www.little-lever.bolton.sch.uk |
| Dates of previous inspection | 27 and 28 November 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- Leaders use two alternative providers for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the principal, other senior leaders, three trustees, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils.
- The lead inspector held a telephone call with a representative of Bolton local authority.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, modern foreign languages, history, science, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- Inspectors held meetings with the leaders responsible for the school's safeguarding arrangements. They also scrutinised leaders' safeguarding records, including pre-employment checks for staff. Inspectors evaluated leaders' procedures for keeping pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff about their well-being and workload. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of pupils from different year groups. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

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|----------------------------|------------------|
| Gary Kelly, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Craig Yates | Ofsted Inspector |
| Dean Logan | Ofsted Inspector |
| Sharon Asquith | Ofsted Inspector |

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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