

Inspection of a good school: Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Station Lane, Birkenshaw, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD11 2JE

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 April 2022

Outcome

Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The pupils at Birkenshaw are very positive about their school. A group of pupils summed it up in two words 'supportive and inspirational'. They engage fully in their lessons. At social time, there is a lively, fun-filled atmosphere as they play with their friends, making use of the equipment and the activities provided for them. Pupils are polite and eager to talk about what they enjoy at school.

The school's vision is to be a caring school. This vision is understood by staff, pupils and parents. One parent commented, 'There is a lovely sense of community and the ethos of the school is clear in day-to-day life.' Pupils are very well cared for. They start the day with an emotional check in with their teachers. Bullying and even name-calling are rare events and pupils are confident that teachers will always be on hand to support them if they have a problem. Pupils relish the opportunities to take responsibility as school councillors, eco-councillors, digital leaders, librarians or as part of the care crew. One of the roles of this last group for older pupils is to read remotely to residents of an old people's home.

The school community come together when necessary to support each other, including during the pandemic. Many parents commented in the parents' survey on the quality of support through lockdown and beyond. The vast majority would recommend the school and all the parents and carers who spoke to the inspector were positive about the school.

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

Leaders have created an exciting place to learn. Leaders are ambitious for every pupil. The curriculum, the environment and the extra opportunities that pupils receive enable everyone, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to benefit from a broad and rich learning experience. The curriculum is ambitious. However,

leaders are honest that the curriculum is more effective in some subjects than in others as subjects are at different stages of being developed.

Reading is a priority. There has been significant investment in reading materials and books. This is increasing pupils' enjoyment of reading. Strong staff training means that staff have the expertise in teaching phonics. Pupils who need extra support to read well receive it. Parents and carers are encouraged and supported to help pupils in the early stages of learning to read with books and electronic resources that match the school's reading programme. Older pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. The pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the progress of some pupils' reading development. However, the reading programme developed by leaders is helping pupils catch up for lost time.

Pupils are very positive about mathematics. It is usually one of pupils' favourite subjects. Teachers encourage pupils to explain their reasoning, and this helps them understand deeply. Pupils in key stage 2 know their times table very well. The teaching of numbers in Reception is ambitious. Children count confidently beyond twenty. Pupils with SEND are supported well in mathematics. They access the full curriculum or, where appropriate, follow their own tailor-made approach. Teachers are very confident in the teaching of the subject.

Leaders and teachers are clear that they are still developing the curriculum in geography. It is increasingly ambitious and properly planned. New resources have been bought, such as atlases that are suitable for the age of the pupils. However, while pupils can talk confidently about the work they are doing currently, such as North America in Year 6 and climate zones in Year 4, many are not able to remember previous topics, and therefore do not make connections to help them understand new learning in detail. Teachers do not consistently assess whether pupils have fully understood new learning, so that they can be sure that pupils can build on it.

The school provides many opportunities for personal development. This is, in part, another reason for the excellent behaviour of pupils as they are taught to be considerate and caring. The school was running an ambitious programme of extra-curricular activities before the pandemic. Leaders intend to resume this in the coming months. Leaders have thought hard on how to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. A catch-up swimming programme has been put in place this year, and careful thought is going into the planning of trips and visits given what different groups may have missed in the last two years.

The school is exceptionally well led and managed by the headteacher. She is supported by an effective governing body who know the school well. Staff morale is high. Staff are proud to work at the school and enjoy doing so.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that completing the development of the curriculum in all subjects and developing effective assessment systems in foundation subjects may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The well-being of pupils is at the heart of all the school does. As a result, there is a strong culture of safeguarding. Leaders ensure that all of the correct procedures are followed when appointing staff. Thorough records are kept of any concerns and referrals are made if they are required. Staff receive regular training and understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. Staff ensure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe off and online. Governors have commissioned external reports to ensure that this important work is carried out to the highest standard.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's curriculum is not sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. However, it is clear that leaders are taking action to address this. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to use their developing knowledge and understanding to make connections in their learning. Leaders need to complete the process of reviewing the curriculum in all subjects within their identified timescale. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- In foundation subjects, teachers do not use assessment as effectively as they could. Teachers are not sufficiently aware as to what pupils know and do not know. Leaders have plans to address this. Leaders need to develop assessment practice that is mindful of teacher workload, to ensure that pupils' knowledge is assessed so that teaching can be adjusted to ensure that knowledge is retained.

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 December 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

Unique reference number	107730
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10200472
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	458
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amanda Mahoney
Headteacher	Rebecca Martin
Website	www.birkenshawprimary.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 7 December 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school runs and a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The chair of governors took up her post in February 2022.

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 have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders and other members of staff. The inspector met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. The inspector spoke to representatives of the local authority remotely and a representative of the diocese by telephone.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour both in lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. He gathered pupils' views from both formal and informal discussions.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan.
- The inspector checked the school's single central record, met with the school's designated safeguarding leader and reviewed safeguarding information.
- The inspector met with parents and carers. He took account of the 114 responses to Ofsted's parents' survey, Parent View. The inspector also took account of the 42 responses to Ofsted's staff's survey and 6 responses to Ofsted's pupils' survey.

Inspection team

Andrew Cummings, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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