

Inspection of a good school: Barnes Infant Academy

Mount Road, Barnes, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 7QF

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 June 2022

Outcome

Barnes Infant Academy continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school embodies its core values – the 'Barnes values'. They are seen everywhere and are rewarded each week in assembly. Pupils know and explain how values such as behaving well, having a positive attitude and never giving up make the school a happy place. Pupils talk of being kind and respecting differences in each other. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils play together without fuss. They are delighted to be outside with all their friends after the restrictions of COVID-19. Teachers swiftly address occasional rough play.

Pupils feel safe in school. They are surrounded by people they trust, such as the 'Barnes buddies'. Buddies take pupils to first aid or play with them if they are upset. Pupils feel confident to tell adults if they are anxious or worried. They respond well to teachers' high expectations of them. Pupils concentrate in lessons and try their best. Children in the Nursery are friendly and absorbed in their learning. They are happy and cooperative. One child showed the inspector around with confidence. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They are taught about water safety, given the school's coastal location. They also take part in 'Walk Wise' to learn about road safety.

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

Leaders are committed to raising the attainment of pupils. Assessment is used well to spot gaps in knowledge, especially in reading and number. Pupils' progress is accelerating after issues caused by COVID-19. A new approach to the teaching of phonics is already bearing fruit. There is consistency across classes. Pupils are becoming skilled in decoding words they do not know by sight. Work is pitched well so pupils can blend sounds together to read new words. Books are carefully matched to pupils' reading ability. This means they are becoming confident and fluent readers. Children in the early years listen attentively to picture books which teachers read to them. Older pupils are hooked by the cliffhanger at the end of story time in longer novels. Training for staff is regular. Leaders make checks to make sure pupils are keeping up. Spelling and writing are closely linked to pupils' knowledge of phonics.

Although leaders' recent focus has been on pupils' basic skills, there are significant strengths in some other subjects. Curriculum structure in subjects such as art and design, science and mathematics ensures that key ideas that connect learning are clear. Links to the early years curriculum are identified. Children are well prepared to start the national curriculum in Year 1. Units of work spell out the essential knowledge pupils must remember. Assessment is used well to check on this essential knowledge. It also allows teachers to shape learning and address misconceptions. Pupils build knowledge on what they already know. Pupils know more, remember more and can do more in these subjects. A small number of other subjects in the curriculum lack this clear curriculum thinking. Leaders are currently making the necessary adjustments to make sure pupils have access to a high-quality curriculum.

The individual needs of all pupils are central to leaders' priorities in school. This is especially the case for pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Thorough work from the two special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) makes sure all pupils have access to all subjects in the curriculum. Extra help is given when it is needed. No one misses out on any part of school life or any part of learning.

From Nursery to Year 2, pupils' positive attitude to school supports their learning. Behaviour in lessons is very good. Pupils listen attentively, concentrate and try their hardest. All are keen to take part and answer questions. Any off-task behaviour is dealt with immediately by teachers. Good behaviour is a characteristic of this school.

Pupils' all-round development is supported well. Visits out of school are resuming after the COVID-19 restrictions. Trips to the local museum, the nearby Victorian park, the theatre, the cinema and the beach enhance pupils' appreciation of where they live. Assemblies and teaching in lessons help pupils understand wider current issues, such as the Platinum Jubilee, special fundraising days, religious festivals and the issues in Ukraine. Pupils celebrate and respect the cultural differences of their friends in school. After-school clubs have also resumed. These vary from gardening and arts and crafts to cross-stitch and singing.

Teachers in school say they are valued and respected. They feel trusted to make decisions. Leaders make sure that staff are cared for and that their workload is not too much to handle. More teachers have the time to provide after-school clubs. Unnecessary bureaucracy has been removed. Staff morale has improved significantly this year.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding training for staff is thorough and up to date. This allows them to spot any sign that there could be an issue with a pupil. Systems to report concerns are effective. Record-keeping is meticulous and thorough. This links all incidents and issues together to give a broad picture. Leaders use external consultants to make sure systems are rigorous. Leaders provide help for any pupil in need. The early help worker supports pupils and their families well. All staff are alert to specific, local safeguarding concerns.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, the structure of the curriculum is not helping pupils to know and do more over time. Curriculum thinking in these subjects is unclear. Learning is not well planned and sequenced. Key ideas that run through these subjects are ill defined. Pupils are unable to make connections in learning. Leaders need to make sure that there is a consistent structure of good quality in all subjects. It is clear from leaders' actions that they are bringing this about while making necessary adjustments in response to the impact of COVID-19. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.

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 predecessor school, Barnes Infant School, to be good in April 2012.

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	141045
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10227147
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	337
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ian Laws
Headteacher	Ruth Whiteside
Website	www.barnesinfant.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school converted to become an academy in July 2014.
- It is the only school in the Barnes Academy Trust.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the assistant headteachers, the two SENCOs, teachers, the early help worker and the school business manager. The inspector met three members of the local governing body, including the chair and vice-chair.
- Deep dives were carried out in reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons

where available, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector listened to a range of pupils read from different year groups.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about other curriculum subjects.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and at breaktime. He spoke to pupils about their views of behaviour and a group of pupils gave the inspector a tour of the school.
- The inspector looked at the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks and spoke to governors, leaders, teachers and pupils about safeguarding.
- The views of 38 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were considered. This included the 15 free-text comments.
- The inspector met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. He considered the 34 responses from Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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