

Inspection of an outstanding school: Northowram Primary School

Baxter Lane, Northowram, Halifax, West Yorkshire HX3 7EF

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 January 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Northowram Primary School are kind and polite. They enjoy coming to school and they enjoy learning. Staff and pupils show care and respect for each other. Pupils feel happy and safe at school.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school's vision is 'Inspiring Success Beyond Expectation' and there is a strong commitment to pupils' learning and development that goes beyond the academic curriculum. This is particularly evident through the school's impressive commitment to the importance of learning outdoors.

Pupils behave well. In lessons, they are attentive and engaged. At playtimes and lunchtime, pupils' behaviour is extremely positive. Pupils say that bullying is rare and that they are confident that it would be dealt with by adults if it did happen.

This is a very inclusive school. Pupils learn about diversity and different relationships. They value differences between people and are welcoming to pupils new to their school. They are well prepared to become active and positive citizens. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

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

Leaders have recently introduced a curriculum for foundation subjects that is highly ambitious. There is a clear sequence of learning, with regular opportunities for pupils to link learning from previous topics or across different subjects. For instance, learning in art and design often links to a history topic. Leaders have thought carefully about how the curriculum in early years prepares pupils for the curriculum they will learn later in school. For example, there are many opportunities for children to explore mathematical ideas. Children access well-planned activities that support their learning.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They provide training and support to make sure that reading is taught consistently well. Children in the early years get off to the best possible start in learning to read. Reception-age children have daily phonics lessons. In Nursery, children learn about the sounds in words by playing rhyming games. Pupils read books that are matched to their reading ability. They blend sounds and read familiar words and sentences fluently. Pupils use reading strategies to enable them to read unfamiliar words. When pupils fall behind with their reading, they are identified and given the support they need to keep up.

Teachers make learning engaging and interesting. Teachers make regular checks that pupils remember the important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. They help pupils to remember knowledge by regularly revisiting prior learning. This is particularly effective in mathematics. However, there is variance in the use of assessment. Teachers do not use agreed strategies to help pupils to improve their spelling and handwriting.

Pupils with SEND receive well-targeted support and have the curriculum adapted to meet their needs. Staff understand the needs of these children very well. Leaders work with parents and carers and outside agencies to ensure that plans to support pupils with SEND meet pupils' needs and identify the next steps they should take.

Teachers support pupils' personal development exceptionally well. There is an extensive range of extra-curricular clubs on offer before and after school. These clubs are very inclusive. Leaders ensure that they are well attended by disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. Pupils, including those with SEND, enjoy representing the school in different sporting competitions. There is an extensive outdoor learning curriculum that is well planned and is led by expert practitioners. Pupils enjoy a wide range of outdoor activities, equipping them with valuable life skills. Through a strong personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and different kinds of relationships. They learn to be inclusive and respectful of differences between people. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Governors know the school well. They share the vision and ambition of leaders. They access training to ensure that they understand and perform their responsibilities effectively. Governors and leaders are mindful of staff well-being and workload. Staff speak positively of the care and support they receive from leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Staff have all received up-to-date safeguarding training and have regular updates from leaders. There are systems in place for staff to report concerns about pupils' welfare. When this occurs, leaders follow up these concerns in a timely manner. Appropriate checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe through the PSHE curriculum. They also know how to keep themselves safe when using technology.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variance in the quality of pupils' spelling and handwriting. Leaders should work with teachers to ensure that the school's agreed strategies support improvements in these areas.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 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.

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	107486
Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	10226876
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	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	James Allison
Headteacher	Jane Scardifield
Website	http://northowram.calderdale.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 June 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Northowram Primary School is twice the size of an average primary school.
- The school has nursery provision.
- The school does not currently 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 their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, the inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics and art. For each deep dive, the inspector looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at books and samples of work.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, subject leaders and other members of staff. The inspector also met with representatives of the governing body.
- During the inspection, a range of safeguarding information was scrutinised, including the school's policies and records. The inspector spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults.
- The inspector observed pupils during playtime and lunchtime.
- The inspector took account of the views of pupils through formal and informal discussions. Parents' views were considered through the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and comments made in the free-text responses. The inspector also spoke with parents during the inspection.

Inspection team

Dughall McCormick, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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