

Inspection of Crackley Bank Primary School

Blackthorn Place, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 7BE

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 March 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Early years provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils say that it is easy to make friends at this school. Inspectors agree. Pupils are welcoming, cheerful and full of smiles and good-natured chatter. They enjoy their lessons, respect their teachers and feel safe at school. This is because the staff at Crackley Bank Primary are friendly and supportive. They look after pupils and their families. In turn, pupils, parents and carers say lots of positive things about the school, and the 'Crackley Crew' that work there.

Staff place a high value on good manners and respect for others. Pupils usually respond well to this. They are polite, proud of their school and do their best. If any pupils find it hard to manage their behaviour, staff help them find ways to improve. Most of the time, the school is a calm, orderly place in which to work and learn.

Bullying is not tolerated, and staff stop it if it happens. Pupils, too, are very supportive of one another and are quick to help out if anyone is upset.

Reading, mathematics and many other subjects are organised and taught well. In addition, staff introduce them to new places, activities and ideas that broaden their horizons.

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

Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the school curriculum. To support early reading, they have put a structured phonics programme in place. In the Reception and key stage 1 classes, staff use this programme every day. They make sure pupils get plenty of practice so that they learn letter sounds and build reading fluency. If any pupils need extra practice to keep up, then staff make sure they get it. This continues into key stage 2 if necessary. Furthermore, phonics teaching dovetails with the school's approach to teaching spelling and grammar. The impact of this effective, well-resourced approach is plain to see. Pupils' reading has improved. Writing is not yet as strong, but standards are rising.

Leaders have also strengthened the mathematics curriculum. Like reading, it is taught daily. From the Nursery through to Year 6, pupils get lots of meaningful practice that helps them to be quick with numbers.

Curriculum design in other subjects is also well thought through. In all subjects, leaders have identified the crucial knowledge that pupils should be taught. Lessons are packed full of helpful information and activities. The art and design curriculum, for example, is particularly strong. Nevertheless, in some subjects, staff try to cover too much or assessment is not as sharply focused as it could be. This means that teaching does not focus enough on deepening pupils' knowledge in some important aspects of their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good-quality support. This enables them to access the full curriculum and be included in all that the school does. Staff consult with other professionals to ensure that pupils' needs are identified accurately.

In the mornings, pupils come straight into school and settle quickly to their early morning work. This calm, purposeful start sets the tone for learning and behaviour for the rest of the day. Indeed, reliable routines and a consistent approach to managing behaviour mean that pupils know what is expected. They do their best to live up to the school's expectations to be calm, truthful, safe and kind. This allows everyone to get on with their learning and to enjoy school life.

In addition to classwork, staff take pupils out and about. They teach pupils about the local area, but also take them further afield. Residential trips in Years 2, 4 and 6 give pupils opportunities to stay away from home and try new things. School staff have identified '20 things to do before I leave Crackley Bank Primary'. This includes climbing a hill, building a den and visiting a theatre. Such activities help pupils to widen their interests and develop a healthy outlook on life. Pupils also have special jobs. These include an official 'hip-hip-hoorayer' who takes the lead whenever a celebratory cheer is needed in assembly.

The headteacher is a very visible leader with a proven commitment to the school and local area. She inspires loyalty from staff and the local community. Together with other leaders, she has built trusting relationships with parents. Parents appreciate this and describe leaders and staff as approachable, friendly and always ready to listen. Staff value the way senior leaders support them in their work and consider their workload.

The academy trust and local governors maintain informed oversight of the school's work and performance. They know what is working well, and use this information to steer decisions about further school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff have an informed knowledge of local risks. They know how to spot signs that a child may be at risk of harm. When necessary, they report concerns, share information with other professionals and put the right protections in place. They teach pupils how to keep themselves safe and what to do if they have any worries.

Pupils learn about the features of safe, respectful relationships. Staff keep parents informed about the things they can do to help keep their children safe.

All the proper checks on adults in school are carried out and recorded correctly.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In all subjects, leaders have identified the crucial knowledge that pupils should learn, but staff are not always sure what to focus on in lessons. Sometimes, they try to cover too much, miss opportunities to deepen learning or do not check the right things before introducing new learning. Leaders should continue to support staff with further training and/or guidance so that they can identify the most important knowledge to focus on in individual lessons or sequences of lessons.
- The quality of pupils' writing could be better. In part, this is a result of the disruptions to learning caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders should continue to focus on developing pupils' good writing habits and the quality of their writing across the curriculum.

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	143349
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10241071
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Sarah Gribbin
Headteacher	Sara Stevenson
Website	www.crackleybank.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Collective Vision multi-academy trust.
- Leaders provide before-school childcare on the school site. They do not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: reading, mathematics, science and history. In these subjects, the inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at pupils' work.

- The inspectors also looked at the curriculum in other subjects to check how they were organised and taught. The lead inspector observed some pupils reading.
- The inspectors looked at published performance data about the school and a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, governance and school improvement planning. They examined documents published on the school's website.
- The inspectors asked school leaders, pupils and parents about safeguarding arrangements and safety routines. They examined the record of employment checks on school staff and looked at other records.
- Inspectors talked informally with pupils, parents and staff to gather general information about school life. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff and parents' views. Inspectors spoke with some parents at the start of the school day and visited the before- and after-school clubs.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the day.
- During the inspection, the inspectors had formal meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils, the chair of governors and the chief executive officer of Collective Vision multi-academy trust.

Inspection team

Martin Pye, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Darren King

Ofsted Inspector

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