

Inspection of a good school: Alma Park Primary School

Errwood Road, Levenshulme, Manchester M19 2PF

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

Alma Park Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Alma Park Primary School is a welcoming and friendly place. Pupils arrive at school each morning happy, looking forward to the day ahead. Leaders have cultivated a kind and considerate school community where people's differences are celebrated. Positive relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are evident throughout the school.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour. Classrooms are calm and harmonious. In lessons, pupils listen carefully to teachers' instructions and are eager to contribute to discussions. They talk about their work with excitement and live up to leaders' high expectations. Bullying and incidents of unpleasant behaviour are very rare. Leaders deal effectively with incidents of bullying or name-calling. This helps pupils to feel safe.

Pupils take part in many extra-curricular and enrichment activities. These activities are carefully linked to the curriculum and enhance pupils' locational, historical and cultural knowledge of Levenshulme and Manchester. For example, pupils spoke with relish about visits to Nico Ditch, Jodrell Bank and the Royal Northern College of Music. Leaders' thoughtful planning of trips and visits complement pupils' learning of the curriculum.

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

Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes to leadership at all levels of the school. Leaders, including governors, have managed this change well. Leaders have taken decisive action to prioritise the teaching of phonics, reading, writing and mathematics.

Across subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the knowledge pupils should acquire, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They have designed a curriculum that sets out the sequence of learning that runs from early years to Year 6. They have thoughtfully considered how topics and concepts link together

so that pupils build securely on earlier learning over time. They have ensured that teachers are clear about what to teach. Most teachers teach the curriculum well. As a result, pupils talk confidently about what they know and remember.

However, in some subjects, leaders have recently changed the curriculum. For these subjects, teachers have not had the opportunity to put into practice the related professional development. As a result, sometimes they do not choose the most appropriate activities to enable pupils to learn and remember essential knowledge and vocabulary sufficiently well.

Mostly, teachers use effective methods to check what pupils have remembered and understood. This means that most can quickly identify pupils' misconceptions before moving on to new learning. However, in some subjects they do not use assessments effectively in order to pinpoint gaps in pupils' learning of the intended curriculum so that they can adapt future teaching. As a result, sometimes pupils cannot build on prior knowledge effectively when teachers introduce new learning.

All staff are trained in how to teach the new phonics programme. As a result, they teach phonics consistently well. Children in the early years make a positive start in reading. Across the early years foundation stage and key stage 1, they learn to identify and read the sounds that letters make. This helps most of them, including those with SEND and those who are disadvantaged, to read fluently and accurately. Leaders ensure that reading books closely match pupils' reading ability. They help pupils who are struggling with learning to read to catch up quickly. Older pupils enjoy a rich range of books that represent the school and the wider community it serves. They know a wide selection of authors and genres.

Staff accurately identify the needs of pupils with SEND at the earliest opportunity. Consequently, these pupils receive support that is matched precisely to their individual needs. Teachers know pupils well. Those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision benefit from effective support from highly skilled staff. Pupils with SEND follow the same curriculum as their peers and are fully involved in all aspects of school life.

Children in the early years get off to a strong start. Teachers immerse them into a vocabulary-rich environment where they regularly hear songs, rhymes and stories. All children, including those with SEND, enjoy working cooperatively with others. Staff and children have meaningful and frequent interactions. These inspire children's interests. They show a high level of confidence, which prepares them well for the next stage in their education.

Pupils' behaviour very rarely disrupts learning. Pupils want to succeed, so they try their best. Across the school, they are extremely kind to each other and feel that they can 'join in'. They are very well-mannered and polite to visitors.

Leaders are creative in making the most of opportunities for pupils. They encourage them to develop a strong sense of community pride. Pupils are active citizens in the wider community, for example through fundraising and charity events. They learn about and respect different faiths and cultures. Leaders plan events, such as Deaf Awareness Week,

to teach the importance of equality and inclusion. Pupils are proud of their various leadership roles, such as anti-bullying councillors and school council members. They enjoy the wide range of clubs on offer in the school.

Staff are proud to work at the school. Leaders listen to them. They appreciate the actions of leaders to help them to manage their workload and support their well-being. Governors challenge and support leaders appropriately.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a strong culture of safeguarding. Staff receive up-to-date and relevant safeguarding training at regular intervals. They know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil's welfare.

Well-trained staff in the school know the pupils well and know how to address their needs.

Pupils who need help receive it quickly. Leaders engage with external agencies to ensure that vulnerable pupils and their families have the help that they need to stay safe from harm.

The curriculum teaches pupils how to stay safe online and offline. Leaders have identified local risks that pupils need to be aware of. Pupils know who they can speak to if they are feeling worried or anxious.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects, sometimes teachers do not use the most effective pedagogy to teach the curriculum. This means that in these subjects, pupils do not learn as well as in other subjects. Leaders should help teachers to design learning which closely reflects the intended curriculum aims so that pupils achieve well in all subjects.
- In some foundation subjects, assessments do not inform teachers how well pupils are learning because at times they do not fully match the intended curriculum. As a result, teachers do not have sufficient information to adapt future teaching to address gaps in essential knowledge. Leaders should ensure that teachers check pupils' knowledge and understanding well enough to enable them to build on prior learning when moving on to something new.

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 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in May 2013.

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	105389
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10241748
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	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Michael Coates
Headteacher	Richard Williams
Website	www.almapark.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher has been in post since September 2021. There have been four new governor appointments since September 2022, including the chair of governors.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (Manchester Sensory Support Service), funded by the local authority for pupils who have specific learning difficulties. The enhanced resource provision is for pupils aged three to 11 with deafness. The specially resourced provision can cater for 12 pupils. At the time of the inspection, there were 12 pupils on roll. Nine of the pupils attending the specially resourced provision have an education, health and care plan. Three children of Nursery age placed in the assessment centre are awaiting an education, health and care plan.

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 her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and other members of staff. She also spoke with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

- The inspector spoke to pupils about their experience of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. She also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector checked the school's safeguarding policies and procedures and the single central record. She met with leaders, staff and pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and the responses to Ofsted's surveys for pupils and staff.

Inspection team

Kate Bowker, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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