

Inspection of a good school: Irk Valley Community School

Waterloo Street, Lower Crumpsall, Manchester M8 5XH

Inspection dates:

4 and 5 May 2023

Outcome

Irk Valley Community School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Irk Valley are proud to belong to this welcoming and diverse school community. They celebrate their differences and learn the importance of treating each other equally. Pupil ambassadors welcome visitors to their classrooms with smiles on their faces. The school is a joyful place to be.

Pupils, and children in the early years, benefit from leaders' high expectations of their behaviour and what they can achieve. Parents and carers, including parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), value the support that their children receive. This helps pupils, including pupils with SEND, to achieve well.

Pupils feel safe and well cared for. They know who to turn to if they have a problem. Typically, pupils are kind, respectful to each other and behave well. If bullying should happen, leaders swiftly put a stop to it.

Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide variety of trips and activities. For example, pupils told the inspector how they had enjoyed a recent visit to the zoo and how much they are looking forward to performing 'Twelfth Night' on the stage of a city centre theatre. Leaders ensure that there are opportunities for everyone to join in with.

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

Leaders place pupils' needs at the centre of their vision for the curriculum. They have ensured that all pupils and children, including those with SEND, benefit from a high-quality education. They have designed a curriculum that includes a rich and ambitious body of knowledge. This builds logically from the beginning of the Nursery Year up to the end of Year 6. In most subjects, this is helping pupils to learn more and achieve more highly than in the past.

In the main, leaders have made sure that teachers are expertly equipped to deliver the curriculum. Teachers use this expertise to identify and quickly address any gaps in pupils'

knowledge. However, in a few subjects, this work has begun more recently. Teachers' knowledge of these subjects is not as well developed as it could be. This sometimes hinders teachers in designing learning that focuses on the most important content.

Leaders' systems to identify any additional needs begin in the Nursery Year. This helps staff to support children with SEND as early as possible. In all key stages, leaders ensure that pupils with SEND receive the help that they need to learn well. This includes making sure that teachers understand the best ways to support these pupils. As a result, most pupils with SEND succeed alongside their classmates. A small number of pupils who need more specialist help benefit from expert individual support. Their curriculum is successfully meeting their individual needs.

Leaders have made reading a priority across the school. Children in the Nursery Year get off to a strong start with developing their communication and language skills. In the Reception Year and key stage 1, the phonics programme helps most pupils to read accurately and fluently. By the time they reach key stage 2, pupils read a wide variety of books, which they enjoy choosing for themselves.

Most staff are experts in teaching pupils to read. They skilfully support pupils who fall behind in their reading. Nevertheless, some pupils, including pupils in key stage 2, do not catch up as quickly as they need to. They have not had enough practise in matching letters to sounds. This delays their reading fluency and limits their achievement in some areas of the curriculum.

Leaders have ensured that pupils learn about respecting each others' rights. They encourage pupils to consider how their behaviour affects others. Pupils listen attentively in lessons and conduct themselves well. Children in the early years quickly learn the routines of the school, which they follow without prompting. Disruption to learning is rare. At break and lunchtime, pupils play together well. Sports leaders referee games and help their peers to resolve any disagreements on the pitch.

Pupils feel involved in school life. They told the inspector how proud they are to take on any of the leadership opportunities that staff provide. These include volunteering to help older residents in the local community, encouraging their classmates to be more environmentally conscious and training as peer mentors to support each other's well-being. These experiences prepare pupils to be confident and responsible citizens.

Staff are overwhelmingly proud to work at this school. Those who shared their views with the inspector commented that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. Governors are committed to the school. The support and challenge that they provide helps leaders to continue improving the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have established a culture where all adults take their safeguarding duties seriously. Leaders and governors have ensured that staff are well trained. They are

vigilant for signs of pupils being at risk of harm. If staff have concerns, they pass on information swiftly.

Leaders leave no stone unturned to ensure that pupils and their families get the right help when they need it. They work closely with external agencies and follow up any referrals tenaciously to make sure that this help is effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of foundation subjects, teachers' subject knowledge is not as strong as in other areas of the curriculum. This makes it harder for them to teach these subjects well. As a result, pupils do not develop as deep a body of knowledge as they should in these subjects. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the right support and guidance to develop the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver these subjects consistently well.
- Some pupils are further behind in their reading than they should be and are not catching up quickly enough. This limits their success in some areas of the curriculum. Leaders should ensure that these pupils have sufficient opportunities for precise and accurate phonic practice, so that reading becomes increasingly fast and effortless as words become more familiar.

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 July 2014.

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	105452
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10283630
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	466
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anjum Zulfiqar
Headteacher	Vicki Lord
Website	www.irkvalley.manchester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	27 February 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A small number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have significantly more profound and complex needs than those typically found in a mainstream school.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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.
- The inspector completed deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and computing. He met with subject leaders, visited some lessons, reviewed pupils' work and spoke with teachers and pupils. The inspector also observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in several other subjects.

- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation. He spoke to the headteacher and senior leaders throughout the inspection. He also met with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- The inspector met with some governors, including the vice-chair of the governing body. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- The inspector held meetings with the staff responsible for safeguarding and scrutinised the single central record. He considered leaders' safeguarding processes and procedures. He also observed pupils during social times and discussed safeguarding with them.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. He also considered the responses to the Ofsted survey for staff. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Ben Hill, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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