

Inspection of a good school: Barley Lane School

Barley Lane, St Thomas, Exeter, Devon EX4 1TA

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

'Ready, respectful and safe' is at the heart of Barley Lane School. Leaders prioritise this so that pupils feel safe and are ready to learn. Pupils value the difference that the school has made to them. They describe how staff listen and give them the help they need to manage their emotions successfully. Pupils appreciate that, even when they have shown challenging behaviour, staff understand them and there is always a fresh start.

Most staff model consistent expectations of pupils' behaviour. Where this is well-established, pupils trust staff and feel secure. This enables pupils to meet the high expectations staff have of them and achieve some ambitious outcomes. However, the academic curriculum is still in a developmental stage. Consequently, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Pupils report incidents where the behaviour of others can disturb their learning. Where this happens, staff are not consistent in their expectations and learning is hindered.

Opportunities to strengthen pupils' character are wide ranging. Pupils develop their confidence and self-awareness well. This enables them to articulate their views and reflect on their educational journey.

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

Staff want the best for pupils. Leaders focus on meeting pupils' social and emotional needs. As a result, pupils are generally calm and purposeful in the way they conduct themselves around the school. Staff place high importance on knowing pupils well. This means they can be vigilant of, and provide support with, any potential triggers which may increase pupils' anxiety or dysregulation. Incidents where pupils become dysregulated and show high risk behaviours are decreasing. Leaders ensure that both staff and pupils have

more effective strategies to de-escalate situations successfully. This work has been impacted by significant turbulence in staffing. Leaders have plans in place to address the inconsistencies that still exist.

Leaders know that the curriculum for many subjects does not match their vision for pupils to achieve as well as they can. Leaders have not ensured that learning is sequenced effectively, so that pupils remember more over time. They do not systematically check on the effectiveness of the curriculum in their areas of responsibility. Teachers do not have secure subject knowledge in areas where they are not subject specialists. Leaders do not have an accurate overview of this and do not have an accurate knowledge of how well pupils learn. As a result, there is not always sufficient information to support curriculum improvement. There are subjects where this is more successful, for example in personal, social and health education. Where the curriculum is well-sequenced, pupils can recall their learning in greater detail.

Pupils develop well because staff work skilfully to overcome their barriers to learning. Parents and carers recognise the difference the school has made to their children. They are appreciative of how staff 'go above and beyond' to provide support. Leaders know that pupils are now in the best mindset to learn, and that the curriculum needs to be strengthened to make this happen. Leaders understand the importance of reading. There has been some attention to improving attitudes to reading and how pupils learn to become fluent readers. However, this lacks consistency and clarity. Some pupils do not develop these skills as successfully as others.

Pupils' wider development contributes well to their readiness to learn. Leaders ensure that the opportunities for older pupils, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, work experience and college placements, strengthen the enrichment that younger pupils experience through their trips and visits. As pupils increase in their independence, ability to manage risks and unpredictable situations, staff encourage them to increase their own aspirations. This prepares them well for the next stage in their education or employment.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school and the challenges it has faced to get to its current place. They are well informed by leaders about school improvement. Governors provide an appropriate level of support and challenge to support leaders to address priority areas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise the safety and welfare of pupils. They fully understand its importance in pupils' ability to successfully be in school. Staff know their responsibilities to safeguard pupils. The daily communication around this ensures that staff remain alert to any signs and concerns from pupils. Leaders are tenacious in their challenge and follow up of support from external agencies. They make sure the appropriate support is in place for pupils and families at the earliest opportunity.

Pupils feel safe. They value the work that staff do to make this happen. They are alert to potential risks that they may encounter.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The design of the curriculum in some subjects is not as well considered as it could be. Pupils do not build knowledge as well as they could. Leaders need to review the curriculum design to ensure that the sequence of learning supports pupils to know and remember more over time.
- Subject leaders do not monitor their subjects closely enough. They do not know what is working well and what to improve to make the most impact. As a result, pupils do not learn as well as they could. Leaders need to ensure that all subject leaders monitor the implementation of their subject. This will enable them to identify areas for development that will make the most impact on pupils' education.
- In some subjects, teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge. As a result, pupils do not learn as successfully as they should. Leaders need to ensure teachers get the support and knowledge they need when teaching outside their area of expertise.
- The strategy for prioritising reading is not fully formed. What is in place is not consistently followed. As a result, pupils do not develop enjoyment of reading, and they lack the strategies needed to be successful, confident readers. Leaders need to be clear on their expectations for reading, to ensure that staff know these and to have sufficient knowledge to help pupils to read well.

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 April 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	113636
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10268736
Type of school	Special
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	7 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	80
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Co-chairs of governing body	Elizabeth Shinn and Helen Crossfield
Headteacher	David Jones
Website	www.barleylaneschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 December 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Barley Lane School is a foundation special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. Pupils also have a range of additional special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- All pupils have an EHC plan.
- The school currently has boys only on roll.
- The school makes use of two unregistered alternative providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- 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.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and a representative from the local authority. In addition, an inspector met with the co-chairs of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English including early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector listened to pupils read to an adult.
- Inspectors met the designated safeguarding leaders, checked the single central record of adults working in the school and looked at safeguarding records.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in class, around school and at breaktimes and held discussions with leaders about pupils' wider development.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views by considering responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, and by talking to parents before school. They also evaluated responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Leanne Thirlby, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paula Marsh

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023