

# Inspection of a good school: Birchfields Primary School

Lytham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6PL

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Inspection dates:

13 and 14 March 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?

Pupils feel at home in this school. Their different backgrounds are actively recognised and celebrated. They are safe and happy. They enjoy the clubs and competitions on offer to develop their talents and interests. Pupils are particularly fond of the 'autumn slam' and 'spring slam' mathematics competitions. Sporting opportunities are plentiful and well attended. Pupils also value their rock band club.

Older pupils apply for prefect roles, which come with specific duties, such as running the school tuck shop or acting as sports leaders. Pupils enjoy these responsibilities and carry them out happily.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), can achieve in their learning. In some subjects, pupils achieve well. However, pupils' achievement across the curriculum is uneven because leaders have not clearly identified what pupils need to know and how they should learn it.

Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. They behave particularly well during lesson time because they are keen to learn. Leaders take swift action when rare incidents of bullying happen.

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

Leaders have developed a broad curriculum, which takes account of pupils' different backgrounds. They have outlined the overall themes and topics that pupils will study. In a few subjects, leaders have also identified the specific knowledge that pupils will learn and when they will learn it. However, in other subjects, and in the early years, leaders have

not given the same level of thought to what pupils need to know. This means that teachers are unclear about what they are expected to teach. This prevents them from designing learning activities that help pupils to build their knowledge securely and in a logical manner. As a result, pupils do not achieve consistently well across the curriculum.

Teachers carry out effective checks on pupils' learning in subjects where leaders have identified the specific knowledge that pupils should learn. Teachers use the information they gather to help pupils correct their errors and overcome their misconceptions. They also use this information to help identify pupils with additional needs, such as SEND. Leaders have ensured that teachers have appropriate guidance on how to adapt their delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND so that they can learn alongside their classmates.

Leaders cater well for many aspects of pupils' personal development. They help pupils to gain a strong understanding of physical health and mental well-being. Leaders have ensured that pupils, and their community, are reflected in the subject content that pupils learn. Pupils have opportunities to debate difficult topics related to issues in society.

Leaders promote a love of reading. They make sure that pupils have access to a wide range of books that positively reflect the diverse community of pupils at the school. Leaders prioritise the teaching of phonics. Leaders ensure that children begin to learn phonics as soon as they join in the early years. Teachers are suitably trained to deliver the phonics programme well. Pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Leaders organise additional support for some pupils who need extra help with learning to read. However, this support does not have the intended impact, and some pupils do not catch up in their learning of phonics quickly enough. This is because some staff have not received sufficient training in how to provide effective support to close the specific gaps that pupils have in their phonics knowledge.

Pupils experience minimal disruptions to their lessons because they are highly focused on their learning. Leaders have ensured that there are effective systems in place to manage any behaviour issues well. Leaders keep a close eye on any patterns of behaviour that might emerge and are responsive to any issues so that they do not spread.

Governors and school leaders actively seek the views of staff. They respond positively to staff's feedback. Staff recognise and appreciate the efforts of leaders to help them manage their workload and well-being.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are vigilant to the signs that might suggest that pupils are at potential risk. They know what actions to take in response to any concerns. They record their worries and report them to leaders. School leaders take appropriate actions to manage such concerns. They engage with external agencies, where necessary, to arrange any additional support that families might need.

Pupils learn how to maintain safe and healthy relationships with others. They learn to stay safe when using the internet.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- In many subjects, leaders have not provided sufficient guidance on the specific knowledge that they want pupils to learn and how best teachers can deliver this subject content. In these subjects, pupils do not build their knowledge as securely as they could. Leaders should clarify the specific knowledge they expect pupils to know. Leaders should also provide clearer guidance to teachers on how best to design activities that help pupils to build a secure body of knowledge over time.
- The additional reading support that pupils receive is not effective in helping these pupils to close the specific gaps in their phonics knowledge. This means that some pupils do not learn to read fluently as quickly as they could. Leaders should ensure that staff have sufficient expertise to provide support that helps pupils to catch up in their learning of the sounds letters make so that they become fluent, confident readers.

## **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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in February 2018.

## **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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	130380
<b>Local authority</b>	Manchester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268990
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	664
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Linda Wales
<b>Headteacher</b>	Samantha Offord
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.birchfieldsprimary.com">www.birchfieldsprimary.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 and 7 February 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with a group of governors. They also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.

- The lead inspector met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding and their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff. Inspectors also checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

### **Inspection team**

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Hesmondhalgh

Ofsted Inspector

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