

Inspection of Well Lane Primary School

Park Road, Tranmere, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH42 5PF

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Children in the early years and pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not receive an acceptable standard of education at this school. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not benefit from an ambitious and engaging curriculum.

Leaders and staff have low expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. Pupils and children in the early years are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Pupils appreciate being warmly welcomed by staff each morning. They enjoy being with their friends at school. However, the poor behaviour of some pupils impacts negatively on their enjoyment of school. Often this misbehaviour is not dealt with effectively. Despite this, pupils are safe at school. They feel that they can use the 'worry jars' in their classrooms to share their problems. They also told inspectors that they have staff that they can speak with about any worries that they may have. When bullying occurs, leaders deal with such matters swiftly and effectively.

Pupils enjoy the trips and visits that leaders provide. Older pupils enjoyed challenging themselves to try new activities during a trip to an outdoor adventure centre. However, there are very few activities for pupils to develop their talents and interests. This limits pupils' development beyond the academic curriculum.

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

Leaders and governors lack the capacity to tackle the considerable shortcomings at this school. Over time, a lack of oversight, coupled with low expectations, has resulted in almost all aspects of the school declining. Pupils, including those with SEND, do not fare well academically and they have limited opportunities to develop personally.

Leaders have not set out an ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of pupils. Too little thought has been given to what pupils need to learn and when this content should be taught.

Most subject curriculums lack ambition and coherence. In lessons, teachers select random activities from different schemes when making decisions about what they should teach. As a result, pupils experience a series of disjointed, disconnected activities. Pupils do not gain a secure body of knowledge on which they can build. Instead, they have considerable gaps in their learning, which accounts for their weak achievement. For example, in 2022, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected standard in reading and mathematics was significantly below the national average.

The weaknesses in Years 1 to 6 are reflected in the early years. A lack of curriculum thinking in this area of the school means that the activities children complete do not help them to flourish across all areas of learning. Too often, they engage in tasks that lack purpose and fail to build their knowledge. Adults do not routinely introduce or embed new vocabulary. Consequently, children do not learn how to communicate or share their ideas well enough. They begin Year 1 without the necessary foundations on which to build.

Leaders have not ensured that subject leaders have the skills that they need to design their subject curriculums effectively. Subject leaders lack the understanding that they need to provide guidance and support for their colleagues. In addition, many teachers do not have secure subject knowledge. They do not understand how to shape their teaching, so that pupils and children build their knowledge well over time.

In most subjects, assessment strategies are ineffective. Subject leaders and staff are unsure what they should be checking and when this should happen. Staff do not routinely spot pupils' misconceptions or check that pupils' understanding is secure before they move on to new learning. Gaps in pupils' knowledge go unchecked.

Leaders have not made the teaching of reading a priority. They do not make sure that pupils experience a high-quality reading curriculum from the early years to key stage 2. Staff are not well trained to deliver the phonics programme. The support provided for pupils who are struggling to learn to read, including pupils in key stage 2, does not help them to catch up quickly with their peers. Some of the books that these pupils are provided with to practise their reading are not well matched to the sounds that they have learned in class. This means that pupils are not equipped with the phonics knowledge or reading skills that they need to become confident and fluent readers. This hampers their learning in other curriculum areas.

Leaders have systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. However, these pupils do not get the help and support that they need with their learning. Teachers are ill-equipped to adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet the needs of these pupils. They rely too heavily on teaching assistants to provide support for pupils with SEND.

Leaders have not ensured that there is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Staff do not deal with pupils' behaviour consistently well. Learning is frequently disrupted by poor behaviour. This impedes how well pupils learn.

Leaders have prioritised support and activities that focus on pupils' personal development. However, they have not ensured that pupils learn all that they should in readiness for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils' knowledge of values such as democracy are underdeveloped.

Over time, governors have not taken suitable steps to assure themselves of the accuracy of information given to them by leaders. Governors have failed to take purposeful action to ensure that leaders improve the poor quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff receive regular safeguarding training. Staff know how to report concerns about a pupil's well-being or safety. This helps leaders to identify and support pupils who may be at risk of harm. Leaders act swiftly in partnership with external agencies to keep pupils safe when required.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For instance, they know some of the risks associated with working and playing online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that pupils in Years 1 to 6 and children in the early years benefit from an ambitious, well-designed and well-ordered curriculum. This means that pupils experience a disjointed and uneven curriculum, which lacks coherence. This accounts for their poor achievement in many subjects. They are not well prepared for their next stage in education. Leaders must clarify their curriculum thinking as a matter of urgency and implement a curriculum that enables all pupils to achieve well.
- Leaders have not ensured that the staff, including those in the early years, have the expertise that they need to deliver the phonics programme and reading curriculum effectively. This means that pupils are not equipped with the phonics knowledge or reading skills that they need to become confident and fluent readers. Leaders must ensure that all staff are equipped to deliver the phonics programme and reading curriculum and that appropriate strategies are in place to help pupils who are behind in reading to catch up quickly with their peers.
- Many subject leaders have not been trained or supported to lead their subjects effectively. This hinders them from providing effective guidance and support for their colleagues. Leaders must ensure that subject leaders are provided with the training that they need to provide effective guidance and support to their colleagues to ensure pupils are supported to achieve well.
- Staff do not have a secure understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. They do not adapt the delivery of the curriculum sufficiently well for these pupils. Pupils with SEND do not have their needs met. Leaders must ensure that teachers are suitably trained to support the learning of pupils' with SEND, so that these pupils achieve well.
- There is an absence of high expectations for standards of behaviour and clear, consistent systems for dealing with poor behaviour across the school. These issues prevent pupils from learning. It also spoils their enjoyment of school.

Leaders must establish clear and consistent systems and expectations to create a positive culture, where good behaviour is the norm and pupils are taught how to behave and learn well.

- Leaders have not made sure that pupils learn all that they should to be ready for life in modern Britain. Leaders should ensure that all pupils experience a range of high-quality opportunities that prepare them for the diverse society in which they live.
- Governors and leaders do not demonstrate the capacity required to improve the quality of education for pupils. They have presided over considerable weaknesses for a length of time. They have not addressed the significant weaknesses at the school or the negative impact that this has on the achievement of pupils. Governors should take urgent action to ensure that they improve their oversight of the school, so that they can hold leaders to account for their actions and the pace of improvement.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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	105050
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10256036
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	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Edward Naylor
Headteacher	Eleanor Daniels
Website	www.well-lane.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There has been considerable turmoil in staffing since the last inspection.
- There is currently an acting chair of governors.
- The governing body operates a breakfast club at the school.
- Leaders make use of one dual-registered alternative provision placement.

Information about this inspection

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

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection that the school has 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 conducted deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, they met with subject leaders and teachers. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors also spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed pupils from key stage 1 and key stage 2 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with governors, including the acting chair of the governing body. The lead inspector also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour, early years, SEND and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff. They also checked the single central record.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding and their wider experience of school. They looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education.
- Inspectors spoke with different groups of pupils to gather their views of the school, their behaviour and their learning. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at playtimes.
- Inspectors also considered a range of documentation provided by school leaders. This included the school development plan, minutes of governing body meetings and leaders' self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents and carers at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Rebecca Jewitt, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Helen Friend

His Majesty's Inspector

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