

Inspection of an outstanding school: Kirkham Pear Tree School

29 Station Road, Kirkham, Preston, Lancashire PR4 2HA

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2023

Outcome

Kirkham Pear Tree School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy an exciting and ambitious curriculum that gives them the tools that they need to become independent and confident adults. Pupils love learning. The excitement on pupils' faces and their big joyful smiles show how happy pupils are in school.

Staff have high expectations for every pupil. They make sure that they fully understand the specific special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of each pupil. They consider what each pupil will need to know and be able to do. This ensures that all pupils achieve exceptionally well. Some parents and carers described their child's experience at school as life changing.

Leaders expect the best from pupils in terms of behaviour. They make sure that every pupil has a personalised positive behaviour plan. This allows all staff to know how to meet each pupil's sensory or emotional needs. Behaviour in and around school is excellent. Pupils feel settled and safe in school. Staff will intervene quickly if pupils fall out, experience bullying or struggle to share. This swift and effective support ensures that pupils feel safe.

Pupils have opportunities that allow them to experience new and often challenging adventures. On a recent trip to London, pupils planned their train journey. They used the underground tube to visit museums and Buckingham Palace. They decided what they wanted to eat, shopped for ingredients, cooked and ate together.

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

Leaders have designed a highly ambitious curriculum. The targets from each pupil's education, health and care (EHC) plan are embedded within the curriculum to ensure that their individual needs are met in full. Leaders ensure that pupils learn a broad range of subjects. Leaders have identified the important subject content that pupils should learn

and made it clear to teachers when this should be taught. This helps pupils to seamlessly build up their skills and knowledge over time. Pupils achieve exceptionally well.

Teachers are experts in their field. They know and understand how pupils with SEND learn best. This has enabled them to be innovative and creative in how they deliver the curriculum. This accounts for pupils' joy in learning.

Teachers use assessment strategies well to identify the very small steps of learning that pupils should cover. Teachers carefully reshape their teaching to make sure that pupils have learned all that they should. By the time that pupils move into key stage 4 and the sixth form, they are able to apply their knowledge very well to support their independence. For example, they use their knowledge of number to plan bus and train journeys. They also use fine motor skills to write stories, letters and shopping lists.

Pupils' communication and language development is highly personalised. Children in the early years enjoy songs, rhymes and stories that hold their attention and help them learn key words. Staff choose their language with care, so that children learn the routines and understand when it is time to learn and time to play. Staff use a wide range of resources, including sign language, visual images and technology to support pupils' communication. Over time, pupils who are non-verbal learn to communicate their opinions, needs and wishes.

Pupils are immersed in stories, non-fiction texts, poetry, dance and drama. Staff use their expertise well to help pupils learn the sounds that letters represent. There is a solid connection between communication, language development and reading. The consistent approach means that many pupils learn to read with confidence.

Staff are intuitive to the needs of each pupil. They are proactive and will ensure that there are sensory or movement breaks to support pupils' learning. Staff also use massage and a range of resources, so pupils with physical needs are comfortable, relaxed and can continue to engage in learning with their peers. This all happens quietly, calmly and with respect. It ensures that there is very little low-level disruption to learning and pupils behave extremely well.

Leaders have ensured that all school activities include every pupil, irrespective of the complexity of their needs. All pupils have an equal opportunity to flourish. For example, all pupils take part in drama productions. On residential trips and outdoor learning activities, staff ensure that adaptations are in place to allow all pupils to enjoy water sports or outdoor fun. Staff help pupils to appreciate the awe and wonder in the world through sensory experiences, music, food and dance. Visits to places of worship help pupils to experience different cultures and celebrations.

Pupils in key stage 4 and students in the sixth form are prepared well for their next stage in education. Staff harness pupils' interests and aspirations to support them to undertake work experience and vocational learning. Some pupils have moved into paid work, training, or further education.

The governing body have a breadth of skills. They hold leaders to account and assure themselves that every individual in school has the best possible education.

Staff feel that leaders are considerate of their workload and well-being. They feel listened to and supported by leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The safeguarding team has been expanded this academic year to provide additional support to families, pupils and staff. Training is carefully targeted. For example, staff gain an in-depth knowledge of the particular safeguarding risks that pupils with SEND may face.

Leaders work closely with the local authority to ensure pupils and their families have the right support around them to keep pupils safe.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in June 2017.

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	119887
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10240969
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	101
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Will Gale
Headteacher	Kate Walker
Website	www.peartreeschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has taken up post since the previous inspection.
- Leaders use two unregistered alternative provisions.
- At the time of this inspection there were no children under the age of five.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for a wide range of needs, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, speech, language and communication, autistic spectrum disorder, social, emotional and mental health, multi-sensory impairment, physical disability, severe learning difficulty and profound and multiple learning difficulty.

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 met with the headteacher, senior leaders, subject leaders and governors, including the chair of governors. The lead inspector spoke with two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication, language and early reading, physical development and physical education and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about other subjects.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and pupils' wider development. They also spoke with leaders, staff and pupils about safeguarding, behaviour and personal development.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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