

Inspection of an outstanding school: Pikes Lane Primary School

Gibraltar Street, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 5HU

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding 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. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils value the friendly atmosphere at Pikes Lane Primary. The school's motto, 'together we can be the best', unites this welcoming community. Pupils feel valued and are involved in all aspects of school life. They are happy and feel safe.

Pupils appreciate the way in which staff support them in meeting the school's high expectations of their learning. Since the previous inspection, there had been a decline in the standards achieved by pupils in national tests. However, there are now signs of improvement in pupils' work and in their recall of what they have learned in subjects across the curriculum.

Pupils behave well in school. They establish strong friendships with other pupils and play well together at playtimes. They provide visitors with a warm welcome.

The wide range of clubs on offer, such as boxing and cookery, are based on pupils' suggestions. The school also provides pupils with cultural activities, such as visits to theatres, museums and football stadia, to help promote an awareness of their local heritage.

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

The school has been through a difficult time in recent years. Having suffered disproportionately from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the consistency of teaching within the school has been affected by a large number of staffing changes, including in the leadership of the school. The school is starting to recover well from this.

The school has recently refreshed the curriculum, including in the early years, to focus on the key knowledge that pupils need to acquire. As a result, pupils are building well on their prior learning. Staff have been supported effectively in the development of their subject knowledge in order to bring greater consistency to the quality of education experienced by pupils. Staff use their knowledge to check carefully on pupils' understanding to address any misconceptions that they may have. For example, in the early years, they use opportunities throughout the day to reinforce the intended learning for children who have not fully grasped what has been taught. However, in some subjects, there are some elements of essential subject-specific knowledge that the school has not defined well enough for teachers. As a result, staff do not teach some aspects of subject knowledge in sufficient depth. This means that, in these areas, pupils' achievement is not as strong as it could be.

In reading, the school has introduced a new phonics programme. In the early years, children get off to a good start in developing their understanding of letters and the sounds that they represent. In key stage 1, pupils read books that staff have matched well to their phonics knowledge. The school has supported staff in putting this programme into place. The new approach is improving pupils' phonics knowledge. However, the support for some pupils who find reading difficult has not been effective enough in helping them to apply this knowledge to increase their reading fluency and understanding.

The school quickly identifies the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), particularly in the early years. Staff help these children, and pupils in the rest of the school, to have access to the same curriculum as their peers. The small number of pupils with SEND for whom this is not the case study an appropriate curriculum that is matched to their needs.

Some children in the early years find it hard to settle into the environment at the start of the year. Despite this, they have positive attitudes towards school and are keen to learn. Elsewhere in the school, pupils focus well on their work. Disruption to learning is rare.

The school has put in place high-quality opportunities for pupils to learn about other cultures and faiths, such as through visits to different places of worship. Pupils have a strong understanding of equality and respect each other's opinions. They particularly enjoy engaging in a range of debates about current affairs. The school provides a wealth of opportunities to enhance pupils' personal development. For example, whether as a playground leader, a subject ambassador or a house captain, pupils in upper key stage 2 develop a strong sense of confidence and achievement.

The school engages well with staff to ensure that they feel supported on key matters such as their well-being and workload. The school makes time available for staff to complete tasks and to carry out leadership roles.

The school has a strong commitment to working in partnership with parents and carers. For example, pupils and their families benefit from family learning sessions and trips during school holidays.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- For some pupils in key stage 1 who find reading difficult, the school has not been as effective as it could be in helping them to keep up with the intended curriculum. As a result, these pupils do not apply their phonics knowledge well enough to read with fluency and understanding. The school should ensure that these pupils have increased opportunity to put their phonics knowledge into practice in order to read words with both accuracy and speed.
- The school has not defined fully some of the essential knowledge that underpins subjects. This means that pupils do not develop some important subject-specific skills and knowledge in sufficient depth. The school should further refine subject curriculums so that teachers are even clearer about how they should enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of individual subjects.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in June 2016.

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 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' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	105161
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10226121
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Speak
Headteacher	Julie Cheung (executive headteacher)
Website	www.pikeslaneprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 June 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has experienced a large turnover of staff. Since the previous inspection, twenty-five teachers have left the school. In addition, nine teachers have taken maternity leave in the last two years.
- The post of headteacher is currently vacant. The part-time executive headteacher had been in post for three days at the start of the inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. He also heard pupils read individually and as part of classroom activities.

- The inspector also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in other subjects and spoke with pupils about their work in these subjects.
- The inspector took into account the views of those who responded to Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector also took into account the responses to Ofsted's staff survey and pupil survey.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktimes and when walking round the school. He discussed behaviour and bullying with pupils, senior leaders and other staff.
- The inspector spoke with pupils and leaders about the provision in place for pupils' personal development.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Steve Bentham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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