

Inspection of Benson Community School

Benson Road, Hockley, Birmingham, West Midlands B18 5TD

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not make sufficient progress in their learning during their time in school. This has been the case for several years. The school has not ensured that pupils experience a curriculum that leads to outcomes which prepare them well for the next stage in their education. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are struggling because the school does not make sure that their needs are met.

The personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum is an area that the school is rightly proud of. The 'three B' approach of Benson, Birmingham and Britain is helping pupils to be ready for life beyond school. Pupils enjoy learning about cultures different to their own and how to manage money. They experience a range of trips to theatres and cities, and also take part in residential visits.

Pupils are happy and safe. They behave well. They are kind to each other and respect staff. Pupils are proud to 'Be Benson' and echoes of 'thank you' and 'you are welcome' travel around the school. Pupils see the importance in helping others. They make posters to welcome new pupils to the school. They work with pupils from other schools to explore and experience different cultures. Older pupils take on play leader roles to help younger pupils.

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

Pupils, including those with SEND, do not achieve as well as they could. This is because the curriculum has not been planned well enough to make sure that pupils build on their prior learning. For example, the learning set out in Year 1 does not build on the pupils' prior learning in the early years. The school has introduced significant changes across many curriculum subjects at the start of this academic year. Most subjects now have the content set out through structured schemes. However, the school has not sufficiently considered how the subject strands link together in a way that secures and progresses pupils' learning.

The wholesale changes to the curriculum have happened quickly. The school has not thought carefully enough about the order and priority of changes. These changes have all been brought in with little involvement of key staff. This has left staff grappling with getting to know what they need to teach in many subjects and not knowing what the most important improvement priorities are. This hinders their ability to fully know the content of what they are teaching and how to implement it for their pupils. Pupils either complete their learning tasks, then sit waiting or do not get very far because they are struggling. Despite this, they behave well. Many pupils in this school are already underachieving and they are not being helped to catch up quickly enough.

Where the school has spent time on developing a subject over time, staff are clear about what to teach and how best to do it. Computing is an example of this. Pupils

enjoy and remember their learning and are successful. The focus on phonics is also effective.

The school is failing pupils with SEND. The systems and processes that are meant to make sure that they get the help they need and deserve do not work. Pupils' needs are not always identified. Where they have been identified, targets do not match their specific needs. Where targets have been set, they are not reviewed regularly enough, leaving teachers focusing on out-of-date learning priorities. Staff care deeply about the pupils they work with. However, the school has not ensured that staff are equipped to support pupils' needs well enough. This is affecting staff morale and well-being negatively.

Training and regular oversight are making sure that staff teach phonics lessons consistently well. Pupils know the routines and expectations for the sessions and follow these. This is helping pupils to read words and sentences accurately. The structure and systems in place for 'keep up' and 'catch up' are clear. They make a positive difference to pupils' ability to make sense of text. Older pupils recall stories that teachers have read to them. They enjoy sharing their memories of these. Poems are recalled with fondness too. While an increasing number of pupils learn to read by the end of Year 2, too many are still not able to read at the level expected for their age.

Children in the early years settle well. For many, it was their first few days in school during the inspection. They follow the set routines. Staff interact with children with different levels of success. Sometimes, conversation is used well to support a child's interest, but not always. The school has not ensured that all staff fully understand the early years curriculum and its aims. This leaves children flitting around in their learning, resulting in areas of learning not being taught well enough.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out PSHE curriculum. They learn how to look after themselves in the physical and virtual world. Pupils, including those with SEND, gain much from the range of sporting, musical and creative experiences and opportunities on offer.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school is not doing enough to stem the decline in pupils' outcomes, especially in the core subjects. As a result, many pupils leave Benson Community School lacking the knowledge and skills required for the next stage of their education. The school must make sure that pupils receive effective support to rapidly catch

up so that they are equipped with the knowledge they need to successfully move on to the next stage in their education.

- The school does not support pupils with SEND effectively. Pupils with SEND do not have their needs identified or met well enough. In addition, recommendations and targets set out in pupils' provision plans are not followed up, so these pupils do not receive the support they should. The school should take urgent action to improve all aspects of the provision for pupils with SEND so that they achieve well.
- The school has not managed recent changes to the curriculum well. The changes have been rapidly put in place and do not take account of pupils' prior learning. Staff lack the right subject knowledge to teach the curriculum effectively and pupils' learning is fragmented. The school should prioritise support for staff to secure strong subject knowledge to improve the teaching of the curriculum.
- The school has a fractured sense of purpose and lacks a shared vision. This is detracting from the necessary improvements to the quality of education. The school needs to agree and act on a common purpose so that pupils' learning and outcomes remain front and centre.
- 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' 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	103362
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10290523
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	432
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andrew Bailey
Headteacher	Rachel Medley
Website	www.bensonschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 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

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.

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 COVID19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- During the inspection, the inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: reading, mathematics, English and computing. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector listened to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the governing body, spoke to the school improvement partner and spoke to a representative on behalf of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around the school and at lunchtime. Inspectors also spoke to pupils about behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors 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.
- The inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including parents' free-text responses. They also considered the online pupil surveys and staff surveys. The inspectors considered comments made by staff in person and within meetings.
- Inspectors talked to parents at the school gate and in school.

Inspection team

Kirsty Foulkes, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Rebecca Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Marilyn Mottram	Ofsted Inspector

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