

Inspection of a good school: Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Commons Lane, Balderstone, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 7LL

Inspection date: 12 September 2023

Outcome

Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Balderstone St Leonard's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School is a friendly and close-knit learning community where staff and pupils know each other well. Pupils said that their teachers are kind and that they can talk to them if they have any worries. This helps pupils to feel safe and happy at school.

Pupils in different year groups work well together in their mixed-age classes. Teachers choose topics carefully so that all pupils can build their knowledge well. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and learning. As a result, pupils' behaviour is of a high standard, and they achieve well across the curriculum.

Pupils enjoy sharing their experiences of different traditions and religious celebrations with each other. Pupils said that everyone is warmly welcomed at this school. They have a clear understanding of discrimination, and they are well equipped to challenge any intolerant or unkind behaviour.

Pupils embrace the wealth of clubs, activities and visits on offer. For example, pupils take part in athletics, netball, history club and family trips to the pantomime. In addition, pupils are also keen members of the school council and school community groups. Pupils take on their positions of responsibility with pride and commitment.

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

The school has thought carefully about the design of the curriculum for the mixed-age classes. They have ensured that pupils learn and remember essential knowledge over time. This starts in the early years, where teachers ensure that children are ready for the demands of key stage 1.

The school provides subject leaders with the training they need to continue to develop their curriculum expertise. In the main, teachers are clear about the knowledge that pupils should learn and when this content should be taught. This helps pupils to build a secure body of subject knowledge across a range of subjects. Overall, pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They explain new concepts to pupils with clarity and confidence. Teachers are skilful in bringing learning to life. For example, in history and geography, pupils go on local walks to learn about the rural and historic location of the school.

Teachers regularly check on what pupils know and remember. They quickly identify misconceptions and gaps in pupils' learning. When gaps are identified, teachers support pupils well so that they do not fall behind their peers. In most cases, this is done effectively. However, on occasion, some gaps in the knowledge that pupils remember go unchecked by staff. This hinders a small number of pupils from learning as deeply as they should.

Pupils achieve well in reading. The school has a clear and effective reading programme that begins in the early years. Staff have benefited from suitable training, which enables them to deliver the phonics programme consistently well. Pupils have ample opportunities to read to an adult, and they enjoy the books that they read. Staff ensure that books are matched accurately to the sounds that pupils know. Expert staff identify pupils who find reading more difficult and support them to catch up quickly.

The enjoyment of reading continues for older pupils. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their favourite authors. Teachers carefully select books so that pupils can broaden their vocabulary while reading about different places and cultures.

The school communicates well with parents and carers. For example, it provides information sessions so that parents know how to support children's learning at home, including reading. Parents appreciate being invited into school regularly for a range of events.

The school is proactive in identifying pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school works closely with parents and external specialists to ensure that pupils with SEND, including children in the early years, receive the support that they need to learn well. Teachers successfully adapt their delivery of the curriculum for pupils with SEND. This helps to ensure that these pupils learn the same ambitious curriculum as their peers.

Staff have established clear and consistent routines. As such, pupils behave well in lessons. They approach their learning with enthusiasm. Disruption to learning is rare. Pupils said that they are kind to each other. Older pupils readily take on responsibilities for supporting younger pupils to make sure that they are happy during lunch and playtimes.

The school provides a range of opportunities to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Teachers ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including

online. Pupils learn about the importance of fundamental British values, and they model these values in their everyday actions.

Leaders consider the views and the well-being of staff when making decisions about new policies. Teachers reported that their workload is carefully considered by the school. Staff are proud to work at this school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, staff do not identify pupils' gaps in knowledge as quickly as they should. As a result, a small number of pupils do not learn the curriculum as deeply as they could. The school should ensure that staff use assessment strategies successfully to address these gaps in pupils' knowledge.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in April 2014.

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	119415
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10294321
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Emma James
Headteacher	Victoria Gow
Website	www.balderstoneschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England primary school in the Diocese of Blackburn. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2019. The school's next section 48 inspection will take place before 2026.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision for pupils at the school.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers and pupils, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- Inspectors observed pupils reading to a trusted adult.
- The inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school and their views about behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- 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.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and members of staff. The lead inspector met with members of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Blackburn.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.

Inspection team

Eleanor Overland, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Robinson

His Majesty's Inspector

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