

# Inspection of an outstanding school: Byker Primary School

Commercial Road, Byker, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Tyne and Wear NE6 2AT

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Inspection dates:

11 and 12 October 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?**

Byker Primary School is at the heart of the local community. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They take part in an impressive range of local music and arts projects and regularly attend sporting events.

Relationships are a strength of the school. There is an inclusive culture where everyone is made to feel welcome, whatever their religion or nationality. The school's achievement in this respect reflects their accreditation as a 'School of Sanctuary'. The school goes 'above and beyond' to support families who may be experiencing difficulties. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, staff delivered food parcels to support families who needed help.

Newly appointed leaders have an ambitious vision of 'academic excellence' to prepare pupils for secondary school. Leaders have worked quickly to improve the curriculum. However, they are realistic and know there is still more work to be done. A new behaviour policy is already bearing fruit. Pupils say behaviour has improved. They can focus on their learning in the classroom without distraction. Pupils say bullying is rare, but they are confident a trusted adult would deal with it swiftly.

The school provides a wide range of after-school clubs, such as street dance, gardening and book club. Pupils enjoy a number of special roles and responsibilities, for example the 'mini police' and reading buddies.

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

A new curriculum has been introduced for subjects other than English and mathematics. The school has been supported well by the local authority to plan a curriculum that is relevant to the pupils of Byker. Knowledge and skills have been sequenced to help pupils build on what they already know. For example, in geography, map work is introduced in

the early years. Children can identify local landmarks and describe how to travel between places they know. In key stage 1, pupils can draw simple plans of their bedroom and map their route to school. This prepares pupils to read Ordnance Survey maps in key stage 2. Field trips have been introduced for each year group. Pupils who have recently visited the coast can talk confidently about the causes of erosion. Even so, improvements to the curriculum are yet to fully address some remaining gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. This continues to hamper their achievement.

Many pupils speak English as an additional language or have speech and language difficulties. There is a strong emphasis on teaching vocabulary, woven throughout the curriculum. Within lessons, pupils are given regular opportunities to discuss ideas with their classmates. For example, in mathematics, pre-school children are introduced to language such as 'more than', 'less than' and 'the same as'. 'Maths chat' is a consistent feature of lessons in key stages 1 and 2. Relevant mathematical vocabulary is displayed. Sentence starters, such as 'I know that...'; support pupils to explain their mathematical reasoning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Additional adults provide targeted one-to-one support so that pupils can learn alongside their classmates. Resources, such as coloured overlays and access to practical equipment, support learning. The school has revised individual learning support plans to make sure pupils have the right next steps to work on.

However, sometimes pupils struggle in lessons because teachers have moved on too quickly before learning is secure. For example, some Reception-age children were not secure in numbers one to five before being challenged to subitise higher numbers. Likewise, some pupils are held back when they are ready to move on faster. This is because the arrangements to check what pupils already know and can do are not fully embedded. As a result, learning and activities provided are, sometimes, not well matched to pupils' learning needs.

Reading is prioritised throughout school. Staff have been trained well to teach the phonics programme. Children in Reception get off to a flying start. New reading books have been purchased, which closely match the sounds pupils are learning. Pupils can apply the phonics knowledge they have been taught to read words that are unfamiliar to them. Timely checks are made to ensure pupils are 'on track'. Pupils at risk of falling behind receive the extra help they need. QR codes are shared with parents and carers to help them to support pupils at home. Although results from the Year 1 phonics check are still lower than the school would like, they are improving. Reading for pleasure is promoted well. Pupils experience a wide range of books in English lessons. Pupils benefit from the school's links with a national centre promoting children's books.

Community involvement is strong. For example, as part of the Byker Arts Festival, pupils learned about local history and helped write a vision for the future. Pupils know their responsibility as global citizens. They raised funds for victims of the Turkish earthquake.

Recent changes to the curriculum have increased staff workload. Teachers understand why these changes are necessary. They say leaders are approachable and supportive. Leaders work with staff to find solutions to issues raised.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Although the school has recently introduced a new curriculum that is well planned and sequenced, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge and skills. Sometimes, this hampers their ability to access new learning. The school must ensure that systems to check pupils' skills and knowledge are further developed and well embedded so that any remaining gaps are swiftly identified and addressed. It must ensure that all teachers use this information to provide learning that is well matched to pupils' varying needs so that they achieve to the best of their abilities.

## **Background**

When we have judged 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 July 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' 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	108458
<b>Local authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	10268018
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	447
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Nick Kemp
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michelle Donnison
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.bykerprimary.org">www.bykerprimary.org</a>
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	13 and 14 July 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- Provision for two-year-olds is available at the school.
- There is a breakfast club each morning.
- One pupil currently accesses alternative provision with an Ofsted registered provider.

## 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 the school and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- 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.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. He met with governors, including the chair of the governing board and spoke to a representative from Newcastle local authority. Discussions were also held with some teachers and support staff.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, he 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.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector considered the views of parents via responses to Ofsted's survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspector listened to pupils reading to a familiar adult. He observed pupils' behaviour moving around school and met with pupils formally and informally to gather their opinions across both days of the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Andy Jones, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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