

Inspection of Whittaker Moss Primary School

Highwood, Rochdale, Lancashire OL11 5XP

Inspection dates: 8 and 9 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where pupils are highly valued and celebrated as individuals. Everyone is accepted regardless of any differences that they may have. Caring and supportive staff help pupils, and children in the early years, to settle quickly and develop as confident, happy members of the school community.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils enjoy learning and the majority achieve well.

Around school, pupils make good behaviour choices. Pupils said that they form close friendships throughout the school. Children in the early years play and learn harmoniously together, for example sharing resources and assigning roles when putting on a puppet show. Pupils are proud of their school. They show superb manners, acting politely and kindly towards others, including visitors.

The school provides a broad range of opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests through extra-curricular clubs, such as rugby and coding. Some pupils recently had the experience of playing water polo. The school encourages pupils to be proactive citizens through activities about positive social behaviours. Year 6 pupils are encouraged to act as responsible role models, having achieved the status of wearing a recognisable black jumper.

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

The school has created an ambitious curriculum which has its roots in the early years. Pupils learn well from the curriculum. In 2023, pupils achieved some of the highest results nationally in subjects for which there is published data.

Across the curriculum, the school has identified the important information that it wants pupils to learn over time. In most subjects, this information is carefully considered and ordered to ensure that it enables pupils to build on their prior learning. However, in a small number of subjects, the school has not clearly identified the specific knowledge that pupils need to know as the building blocks for later learning. This is, in part, due to the quantity of information that pupils are expected to learn in some subjects. As a result, on occasion, teachers do not have clarity on what pupils need to learn to help them with their future learning. This means that a small number of pupils are not able to embed some knowledge securely in their long-term memory.

The school prioritises developing a love of reading. This begins in the early years. Pupils enjoy sharing the wide range of literature that the school has selected for them, from both classic and modern authors and texts.

In the Nursery Year, children practise songs and rhymes to help them hear and recognise different sounds. There is a slight delay for children in the Reception Year

starting to learn phonics. However, when this is initiated, most children learn well from the phonics curriculum. Pupils continue to learn more complex letter combinations in Year 1. While the majority of Year 1 pupils meet the expected standard in the phonics screening check, there is some variation in the way lessons are delivered by staff. This means that pupils have different experiences of learning phonics across the school. Where pupils do not keep up with the pace of learning set by the school, they receive additional support. However, a small number of pupils do not learn the phonics code as well as they could.

The needs of pupils with SEND are identified quickly. The school then makes sure that the necessary help is put in place to enable these pupils to learn well across the curriculum. Pupils with SEND receive support from skilled staff and, where appropriate, from external agencies so that they can succeed. Staff make sure that pupils with SEND are included in the full life of the school.

Most pupils are focused on their learning during lessons. Pupils are respectful when moving around the building so as not to disturb others within the open-plan setting. Children in the early years delight in their learning. They use resources independently and talk excitedly about the activities that they have been enjoying, such as measuring out porridge and feeding it to the 'three bears'.

The school places a great emphasis on making sure that pupils are prepared for life in modern Britain. This extends beyond their academic success. Pupils are active members of their local community through the charity work that they carry out. The school provides many first-hand experiences for pupils to develop socially and emotionally. For example, pupils can present talks about their personal experiences. They learn about keeping in good physical and mental health.

Parents and carers shared their high praise for the school. They said that staff create a caring atmosphere and that they value their children coming to this school. The school knows its community well and works effectively in partnership with its members. Parents are often invited into school to participate in workshops to help them understand their children's current learning. This is particularly beneficial in the early years, where parents can spend the first ten minutes of every day practising reading with their children.

Governors are knowledgeable about the school. They support the staff with any new initiatives. This means that changes are often rolled out gradually to ensure that staff are not overburdened. Governors ensure that pupils remain the key priority in all the work that the school carries out.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is variation in how members of staff deliver the phonics curriculum. This means that a small number of pupils do not learn the phonics code as quickly or as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff have the necessary skills to support pupils effectively in their phonics learning.
- In a small number of subjects, the school has not identified the specific knowledge that pupils will be taught to help them with later learning. This means that teachers are unclear on what they need to deliver in some subjects. As a result, a small number of pupils are not able to build their knowledge securely. The school should make sure that it completes its curriculum thinking so that teachers know what to teach and pupils learn all that they should.

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	105781
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10226372
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	427
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Frank Hayley
Headteacher	Melanie Backhouse
Website	www.whittakermoss.rochdale.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	16 October 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs an on-site breakfast and after-school club.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- 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 met with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher, as well as other subject leaders in school. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority.

- The lead inspector met with the chair of governors and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics, design and technology, history and art and design. For each deep dive, this involved holding discussions about the curriculum, visiting a sample of lessons, speaking to pupils about their learning and looking at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed several pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at the work completed by pupils. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and recreational times. An inspector visited the school's breakfast club.
- Inspectors took account of the responses from the Ofsted surveys for staff and pupils. An inspector spoke to parents at the start of the day. Inspectors also considered the responses from Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors also considered a range of documentation, including minutes from governing body meetings, attendance records, behaviour logs and information on pupils' destinations for those who left mid-year.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.

Inspection team

Sheena Clark, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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