

Inspection of an outstanding school: Princes School

Selborne Street, Liverpool, Merseyside L8 1YQ

Inspection dates:

28 to 29 November 2023

Outcome

Princes School continues to be an outstanding school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils flourish at the Princes School. Staff cater exceptionally well for pupils' individual special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). When pupils join the school, they quickly become part of the 'Princes family'.

Highly skilled staff provide excellent education, care and support for pupils. The school has limitless expectations and aspirations for pupils' achievement. In all aspects of school life, pupils live up to, and often exceed, these expectations. Pupils' achievement is noteworthy.

The relationships that pupils form with adults are exemplary. Pupils trust adults to care for them and look after them. Pupils are typically seen smiling. They engage positively with the staff around them. For pupils, and their parents and carers, the school is a haven. Pupils are happy at this school. They shine.

Pupils' behaviour is commendable. As pupils progress through the school, they are taught how to recognise their own emotions and they manage their own behaviour with ease. Pupils thrive working alongside other pupils in their class. The school's approach to behaviour management is highly effective. As a result, pupils learn in calm and purposeful classrooms.

Pupils blossom outside of lessons because of the impressive range of enrichment activities that the school provides. For example, pupils grow in confidence during their carefully planned residential trip. Pupils said that they accomplish things which they did not feel were possible.

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

The school has put in place a first-class, specialised curriculum. The different pathways are skilfully and carefully structured so that pupils learn exactly the right content at the right time. Throughout the curriculum, the school breaks down new knowledge and skills

into small, manageable steps for pupils. Within each pathway, staff are adept at making any further necessary adaptations to the delivery of the curriculum. This means that pupils do not get behind in their learning. In fact, they excel.

Alongside this, the school has created a rigorous assessment system across all pathways. Staff use these carefully crafted assessment processes to gather information about how well pupils are achieving. They successfully and meticulously use this information to move pupils on to the next step when they have gained and remembered a piece of key knowledge. Staff also use assessment systems to ensure that any additional needs that pupils have are identified quickly and accurately.

Front and centre of the school's work is to develop pupils' communication and language skills. In each pupil's 'crown', there is a target focusing on the precise next step that pupils must take. From the earliest pathway, pupils learn to use different forms of communication effectively. Pupils with more profound learning needs use specific tools to help them to communicate choices with confidence and accuracy. Staff are consistent and proficient in teaching pupils to use these approaches.

Pupils access a wide range of books throughout the school. These include pictorial and sensory books, covering a vast range of topics. Pupils like books and enjoy reading. At times, they engage with books independently. Pupils who are developmentally ready learn the foundations of phonics. For instance, they begin to identify initial sounds in the environment.

Pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are a considerable strength of the school. They attend school regularly. Staff know their pupils very well and they keep them on track with their learning. As a result, pupils remain focused on activities within lessons. Outside of lessons, pupils use equipment sensibly.

Pupils' personal development is at the heart of the school's work. There is an extremely strong focus on preparing pupils for adulthood. For example, pupils visit the local supermarket or café to develop skills for later life.

Pupils get opportunities to learn about different faiths and religions. Pupils work closely with their local community. For example, one class is working with the local mosque. A different class is working with a local foodbank. These experiences help pupils to contribute successfully to their community.

There is a wealth of opportunities for pupils to build their confidence, independence, and their social skills. These opportunities include pupils attending a school grotto, summer fairs or attending a local sports competition.

Governors visit the school often to check on the quality of education. They have a clear understanding of the school's work. Staff benefit from high-quality professional development, which helps them to deliver the curriculum with excellence.

Staff value the mutual support that they receive from their colleagues. They welcome the well-being and workload initiatives that the school has introduced. These strategies

include appropriate deadlines for administrative tasks. Staff said that these initiatives help them manage their workload extremely well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2012.

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	104750
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10256241
Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Peter Hawkins
Headteacher	Colin Hughes
Website	www.princesprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	2 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan. The school caters for pupils with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. Several staff are new to their leadership roles.
- Some staff have joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 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 that 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.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: communication and language; physical development; and personal, social, and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, talked with pupils where possible, spoke with staff, and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors listened to a small group of pupils read.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders to discuss pupils' rates of attendance and pupils' behaviour.
- The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes and during their snack time. They scrutinised leaders' records of behaviour.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan and the school's self-evaluation document.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders 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 staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff and pupils. However, there were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Stuart Perkins, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Edmondson

Ofsted Inspector

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