

Inspection of Bacup Thorn Primary School

Cowtoot Lane, Bacup, Lancashire OL13 8EF

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 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?

Pupils, including children in the early years, thrive at this happy and welcoming school. There is a shared sense of community between staff, pupils, and their parents and carers. Pupils are taught how to recognise and manage their own emotions, which helps them to behave well.

Pupils take on a range of leadership roles to support each other. For example, well-being warriors help any pupils who are struggling emotionally by engaging them in activities such as mindful colouring.

Teachers encourage pupils to have high aspirations for their own achievement. They support and inspire pupils to work hard. Typically, pupils achieve well. The school makes sure that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive the additional help they need to participate in all aspects of school life.

Pupils benefit from a well-considered personal development offer that broadens their horizons. For instance, staff organise careers conventions where pupils interview representatives from a broad range of professions. Pupils enjoy a vast array of trips. These enhance their learning and develop their independence.

The school provides a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, including computing, choir and street-dance club. These activities encourage pupils to explore their talents and interests. Pupils were proud of the array of sporting successes that teams from the school have achieved.

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

The school has a well-designed curriculum, which is suitably matched to pupils' needs and interests. Although the curriculum has been in place for some time, the school conducts regular reviews to ensure that it remains suitably broad and ambitious for all pupils, including those who are disadvantaged.

Starting in the early years, the school has identified the knowledge that pupils should learn in each subject over time. The school ensures that teachers have the subject-specific expertise they need. This helps teachers to design effective learning that develops pupils' understanding well. Children in the early years are supported by well-trained staff who further the development of their language, vocabulary and communication skills through carefully considered learning encounters.

The school has thought deeply about the arrangements for checking on pupils' learning while ensuring that these approaches do not impact unduly on staff workload. Staff make highly effective use of these strategies, which enables them to quickly spot and address any misconceptions that pupils may have. However, in one or two subjects, staff are not as adept at checking that pupils remember their learning over time. This means that some pupils develop gaps in their knowledge

that are not identified and addressed swiftly enough. This hampers these pupils when the learning is revisited in subsequent years.

Reading is at the heart of the school's curriculum. The school ensures that pupils in the early stages of learning to read gain a secure knowledge of phonics. Teachers are clear about how this knowledge develops, starting in the early years. Pupils of all ages regularly practise their reading using a variety of suitable, high-quality texts. The school's effective approach to the teaching of early reading enables most pupils to develop into confident and enthusiastic readers.

Skilled staff provide suitable support so that pupils with SEND can learn effectively. In the early years, the school has ensured that children are supported well to settle in quickly. Staff rapidly develop strong relationships with pupils. This enables staff to swiftly identify pupils' additional needs and to seek support for any pupils who need more help.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils are typically motivated and engaged in their learning, which means that disruption in lessons is rare. Pupils learn how to interact kindly with adults and fellow pupils, and they learn about the likely impact of any unkind behaviour and bullying. Pupils are confident to report any concerns to members of staff, who tackle any issues effectively.

The school has a well-designed programme to promote pupils' personal development. This includes ensuring that staff are clear about the knowledge and skills that pupils should develop, such as during their regular opportunities to learn outdoors. Pupils typically understand and celebrate diversity and the differences between people, both within school and in the wider community. They understand the importance of treating all people with respect. Pupils told inspectors that everyone is welcome at their primary school.

Governors have a strong oversight of most aspects of leaders' work. Governors ensure that pupils are at the heart of their discussions and decision-making.

Staff are happy to work at the school, and they value the support of leaders and governors. Staff at all stages of their careers feel well supported to develop further their own knowledge and expertise.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In one or two subjects, staff do not identify where some pupils have forgotten their prior learning quickly enough. From time to time, the gaps in these pupils' knowledge hinder them from deepening their understanding in these subjects.

The school should ensure that pupils are well supported through strategies to help them to remember their learning over time.

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	119193
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10226359
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	279
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Alison McEwan
Headteacher	Alison Edgar
Website	www.thorn.lancs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2008

Information about this school

- The school has increased in size since the previous inspection, with almost twice as many pupils on the school's roll.
- The school does not use alternative provision for any pupils.

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. The 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, other senior leaders and a range of staff. The inspectors also spoke with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The lead inspector met with a representative of the local authority and the school's independent school improvement partner.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of evidence, including leaders' self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, and minutes of governing body meetings. Inspectors also reviewed records of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- 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 to pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and social times.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, English, geography, and art and design. For each deep dive, they discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some teachers and pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Julie Brown	Ofsted Inspector
Gill Burrow	Ofsted Inspector

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