

Inspection of a good school: John Bunyan Primary School and Nursery

Lancaster Way, Braintree, Essex CM7 5UL

Inspection dates:

27 and 28 February 2024

Outcome

John Bunyan Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils are very happy to be part of their school. They appreciate the extra activities and trips provided, especially for sports and to visit local museums. Pupils enjoy regular workshops from a local theatre company to help them with drama and writing skills. Their framed artwork is exhibited proudly in the school gallery. They can sing in the school choir.

Pupils say that their teachers are the best thing about the school because they make lessons interesting. Staff expect pupils to get fully involved with their learning and complete work to a high standard of presentation. While the different topics help bring learning to life, the way that learning is organised sometimes makes it difficult for pupils to remember important information and regularly practise their skills in different curriculum subjects.

Pupils are kept safe. They do report, however, that a few pupils say unkind things to each other, particularly at playtimes and lunchtimes. A small number of pupils find it difficult to behave consistently well in lessons. Staff take effective action when they see or are told about any of this happening. Leaders and teaching staff are visible and always available at these times, and at the school gates, to talk with pupils and parents.

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

The school actively promotes a love of books and reading. Staff regularly read to pupils, and parents are routinely invited in to share this experience. Older pupils' reading records are detailed and thorough. Pupils are keen to share their enthusiasm for particular genres and authors. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and a drop in the numbers of pupils reaching expected standards, the school introduced a new scheme for teaching phonics. The leadership team has made this its number one priority. Staff have quickly adopted the teaching materials and follow the scheme diligently. Most are skilled in helping pupils learn letters and the sounds they make. A few are not as proficient in modelling and blending these sounds to help pupils read complete words. Overall, though, the new

strategies are having a demonstrable and beneficial effect, particularly with early years children in the very first stages of reading. Some older pupils are still behind where they should be, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Strategies to support these pupils have been strengthened, including through small-group and individual interventions.

The rest of the curriculum is broad in content. Typically, teaching is lively and engaging. Well-planned activities encourage pupils to think and ask questions. Teaching assistants are well deployed to help pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as everyone else.

All required national curriculum activities are covered. Some subjects are taught through cross-curricular themes. This captures pupils' immediate imagination and interest. It also provides pupils with a broad range of cultural contexts. However, the way that the curriculum is organised does not always help pupils remember everything they have been taught. While making links between geography, history and music, for example, it does not always deepen pupils' learning within these subjects. This also makes it more difficult for teachers to check pupils' progress over time. Staff know that pupils have completed the topics and tasks planned, but their knowledge of how pupils are progressing in subject-specific skills is not as precise. Now that the reading scheme is established, the school's next priority is to review and make further improvements to the wider curriculum.

Pupils are lively, confident and inquisitive. Expectations for following routines are clear. Classrooms are attractive and well-organised environments in which to learn. While the conduct of most pupils is very positive, a small number of pupils sometimes find it difficult to behave consistently well. Although this behaviour can disrupt learning for short periods, adults manage it calmly but firmly so that learning can resume quickly.

Securing high levels of attendance has been a long-standing challenge for the school. Particularly good progress has been made since the pandemic. New strategies, including better partnership working with parents and with external agencies, have brought significant reductions in absence. Differences are being made for individual pupils, including those who have found coming to school difficult.

The school's core values are mirrored well through the everyday example of staff. They are also promoted through a broader range of experiences designed to broaden pupils' social, spiritual and cultural awareness.

Staff work hard and consider their workload to be fair. Over the past two years, changes in leadership have meant that some teachers at all levels have needed to take on changes in responsibilities. Although these have been undertaken well, some feel that this has not always been recognised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The new phonics scheme has got off to a successful start, particularly in the early years. However, some older pupils are still not reading as fluently as they should. This includes pupils with SEND. The school should continue to accelerate intervention strategies for these pupils so that all reach and secure age-related expectations as quickly as possible. They should also work with the small number of staff who are less proficient in modelling blended sounds so that they better help their pupils to read fluently.
- The way that the wider curriculum is organised does not always help teachers to identify the progress pupils are making in different subjects. The school should review the wider curriculum programme, with a focus on how pupils are expected to build subject-specific skills and knowledge over time alongside the cross-curricular themes. This is so pupils develop and remember even deeper subject-specific knowledge and skills, and so that teachers can track and assess pupils' work in individual curriculum subjects more easily and more effectively over time.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in March 2018.

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	114818
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10294937
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	542
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Nigel Hill
Headteacher	Lisa Waters
Website	www.johnbunyan.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in April 2023.
- The school does not currently make use of alternative provision.

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.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, 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 other curriculum subjects with leaders, looked at pupils' work and visited classrooms in some other subjects.

- The inspector met with the headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. He also met with the chair of the governing body and two other governors. The inspector held telephone conversations with a representative from the local authority.
- 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 groups of staff and with pupils from across the school. He took account of 55 responses to Ofsted's inspection survey for school staff and 49 responses to Ofsted's survey of parents, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Mark Phillips, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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