

Inspection of Bickerstaffe Voluntary Controlled Church of England School and Nursery

Hall Lane, Bickerstaffe, Ormskirk, Lancashire L39 0EH

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 February 2024

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

What is it like to attend this school?

Bickerstaffe Voluntary Controlled Church of England School and Nursery is a warm and welcoming place. The school sets high expectations for pupils' achievements. Pupils are keen to learn. They are happy and feel safe and supported in school. Pupils, including children in the early years, have positive attitudes to their learning. They take pride in their work and achieve well. The school has fostered the development of pupils in line with their vision to 'Love life, love learning, love each other'.

Pupils behave well across the school. As a result, there is a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Pupils care for and support each other. They respond well to staff's requests and direction. Pupils are aware of who they can talk to if they have a concern.

Pupils benefit from the school's extensive grounds and a well-resourced outdoor environment. This helps to stimulate their engagement and learning. Older pupils have access to and value a range of activities and experiences which allow them to develop their interests. These include sports clubs and residential trips.

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

The school has established a well-structured curriculum which is ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most subjects it is clear what the important knowledge is that pupils should learn and when they should learn it. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They use assessment strategies effectively. This allows them to deliver the curriculum in a way that enables pupils to build their knowledge over time. As a result, pupils across the school, including those with SEND, are well prepared for the next steps in their learning. Children in the early years particularly benefit from a well-thought-through curriculum. This helps children to be exceptionally well prepared for key stage 1.

In a few subjects, however, the school has not clearly identified the important content that pupils should learn and in what order. This makes it difficult for teachers to design learning activities which build on what pupils already know. As a result, in these subjects, some pupils do not learn as well as they could. They struggle to recall some important aspects of their learning.

The school prioritises reading. Pupils benefit from a wide range of reading resources which promote access to, and a love of, reading. Children are immersed in high-quality texts from the moment they join the early years. Staff have benefited from training in the school's phonics programme, which is delivered consistently. Children start to learn phonics as soon as they enter the Reception class, having benefited from a language-rich environment in the Nursery. Teachers' regular checks ensure that those who struggle to keep up with reading are identified and quickly receive effective support. As a result, pupils quickly gain the knowledge and skills they need to become confident and fluent readers.

The school ensures that pupils with SEND are identified early. This allows pupils and their families to access the support that they need. Parents and carers recognise the additional lengths to which the school goes to ensure that pupils' needs are fully met. Pupils with SEND achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour in class and around the school is very positive. Children begin to develop an awareness of the importance of sharing and taking turns in the early years. Staff establish extremely effective routines in the early years, which prepare children well for the demands of learning in the rest of the school. Pupils are polite, respectful and welcoming. They respond well to the school's high expectations of their behaviour. As a result, pupils learn in an environment that is free from distractions almost all of the time.

The school has developed opportunities for the wider development of pupils. These pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities through a range of roles within the school. For example, they could be playground buddies, or could support young pupils in additional physical education sessions. Pupils benefit from access to their classroom 'reflection corner'. This supports their experiences and opportunities to learn about different religious beliefs and relationships.

The school has fostered a positive and supportive culture among staff. It has a strong belief in the 'Team Bickerstaffe' ethos. Staff recognise and appreciate the training opportunities and support provided. The school has taken carefully considered actions to support the workload demands on staff, for example the personalisation of planning and management time.

Governors know the school well. They have a knowledgeable and accurate understanding of the quality of education that pupils receive. Governors ensure that challenge and support go hand in hand for all staff.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of subjects, the school has not clearly identified the important blocks of knowledge and skills that pupils should learn and when they should learn this. Pupils therefore do not learn as well as they could and struggle to retain and recall some aspects of their learning. The school should develop its curriculum thinking in these subjects so that pupils' learning builds on what they already know.

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	119381
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10290058
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Kim O'Brien
Headteacher	Kirstin Carlin
Website	www.bickerstaffe.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not place any pupils in alternative provision.
- The school is a voluntary controlled Church of England school with its next section 48 inspection due in February 2024. The previous inspection took place in November 2019.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of the 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.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of 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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors observed pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke by telephone with a representative of the diocese.
- Inspectors evaluated parents' responses to Ofsted Parent View and the surveys completed by staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Iain Sim, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Withey	Ofsted Inspector

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