

Inspection of a good school: Fairfield Primary School

Peelhouse Lane, Widnes, Cheshire WA8 6TH

Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

Outcome

Fairfield Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school has high ambitions for pupils' academic success. These aspirations extend to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils at this school flourish academically, personally and socially. The school has given careful thought to the school environment which is a haven for the whole school community.

Pupils know and follow the school's rules. They are polite and respectful towards adults and to each other. Staff care for pupils deeply and do their best to ensure that they develop and grow in an environment where they feel happy. Pupils enjoy coming to school and they behave well during lessons. Pupils said that they feel lucky to be a part of the learning community.

The school ensures that pupils are at the heart of all that it does. Pupils are entrusted with meaningful positions of responsibility, for example as safety officers, debate officers and school councillors. They carry out these roles diligently and they talk with pride about what they have achieved.

The curriculum is enriched through an array of clubs and activities, including sports, crafts, music and computing. This helps to make the school a vibrant place. Pupils enjoy a range of trips and visits that help to bring their learning to life. They told inspectors that these rich experiences help to make their time at school memorable and exciting.

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

The school has ensured that pupils, including those with SEND, benefit from a suitably ambitious curriculum. In all subjects, the school has carefully ordered the important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils should learn and remember. New curriculum content builds securely on pupils' previous learning. This helps pupils to achieve well across the curriculum.

Staff are highly knowledgeable about the subjects that they teach. The school undertakes regular reviews to check that subject curriculums are being delivered effectively. In most subjects, staff skilfully use assessment strategies to check how well pupils learn. They provide activities that enable pupils to consolidate their learning and fill any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge that are identified. However, in a few subjects, some pupils do not have enough chances to revisit and recap their previous learning. Occasionally, this means that these pupils do not deepen their knowledge as much as they could.

The school places reading at the heart of all learning. Experiences such as poet and author visits help to motivate pupils to read. Reading advocates act as positive role models for others, for example they recommend books, read to younger pupils and help to select new books for pupils to read. Pupils benefit from an enticing library and reading areas in each class. They enjoy visiting these areas to choose new books to read.

Children in the early years are supported by well-trained staff who further the development of their communication and language skills through carefully considered learning activities. Children start to learn phonics in daily lessons as soon as they begin in the Reception Year. Staff are equipped to deliver the phonics programme well. Pupils regularly practise reading using books that match the sounds that they have already learned. Staff make sure that pupils who are struggling to read receive extra help quickly. This helps them to become fluent and accurate readers in readiness for key stage 2.

Pupils behave well. Effective systems that promote the school's high expectations of behaviour are well understood by pupils and by staff. These systems underpin the caring relationships that are evident throughout school. During lessons, pupils are immersed in their learning. They understand the importance of their education and thrive on developing their knowledge and skills.

The school identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND quickly. Staff receive effective training to equip them with the knowledge of how to best support these pupils. They adapt the delivery of the curriculum very well. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well across the full curriculum.

The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils typically understand and celebrate diversity and the differences between people in school and in the wider community. They learn about different types of relationships and different beliefs. Most pupils understand the importance of treating everyone that they encounter with respect. They said that everyone is welcome at their school.

Governors are actively involved in the school. They conscientiously fulfil their duties, providing effective support and challenge linked to the quality of education.

Staff morale is high. They appreciate the time and consideration that school gives to ensuring they have an acceptable work-life balance. Staff are given the time that they need to attend training and to embed new ideas. This helps staff to feel valued and supported in their roles.

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 few subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils have sufficient opportunities to recap and recall previous learning. This means that some pupils are less confident in recalling learning from previous years. The school should ensure that it provides pupils with more opportunities for pupils to recap and recall previous learning so that they have secure foundations on which to build new information.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in January 2015.

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	111197
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10321318
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	586
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Paul Busow
Headteacher	Vicky Pierce
Website	www.fairfieldprimaryschool.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	20 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, they met with subject leaders, discussed curriculums, visited a sample of lessons, met with teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also observed pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered other subjects in the school's curriculum. They talked with the leaders of these subjects and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.

- Inspectors met with governors, including the chair of the governing body. They also spoke with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with different groups of pupils to gather their views of school and talked with them about their views on behaviour and learning. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and for pupils.
- 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 considered a range of documentation provided by the school. This included the school development plan, records of governing body meetings, headteacher reports and the school's self-evaluation document.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

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