

Inspection of a good school: Belthorn Academy Primary School

Belthorn Road, Belthorn, Blackburn, Lancashire BB1 2NY

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 February 2024

Outcome

Belthorn Academy Primary School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Melanie Furness. The school is part of the Belthorn Academy Primary School Academy Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is a single academy trust overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Emma Nolan.

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a happy and close-knit school community. Staff know the pupils and their families well. This helps pupils to develop strong bonds with their teachers. Pupils are safe and feel secure. They get along with their classmates. They play nicely together at breaktimes and lunchtimes.

The school has high ambitions for what pupils should achieve. Pupils do particularly well in subjects such as English and mathematics. For example, almost all pupils met the Year 1 phonics screening check last year.

Pupils are highly appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and opportunities on offer. These vary from term to term based on pupils' interests and preferences. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the roller-skating club. They also value the many other clubs that range from sewing, chess and boxercise.

Pupils take pride in contributing to community and school fundraising initiatives. They were excited to tell the inspector that they are currently working hard to raise money for a school minibus.

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

The school has outlined its expectations for what pupils should learn by the end of each year, in all curriculum subjects. In subjects such as English and mathematics, the school has ensured that these expectations are clearly broken down into small steps of knowledge. In subjects such as these, teachers deliver subject content in a coherent, effective way. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities

(SEND), achieve well as a result. They build a secure body of knowledge over time in these subjects.

In a few subjects, curriculums are not as well developed. In these subjects, pupils sometimes miss out on intended curriculum content. This means that, in some parts of the curriculum, pupils do not have the opportunity to broaden and deepen their knowledge as well as they otherwise could.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge in many of the areas that they teach. They regularly check how well pupils have understood what has been taught. Teachers provide pupils with helpful guidance. This allows pupils to correct the misconceptions that they might have in their learning.

The school has appropriate systems in place to identify pupils with SEND. It works well with external partners to provide specialist support to pupils where it is needed. Pupils with SEND typically achieve well.

Children in the Nursery Year quickly learn classroom routines. They rise to the school's high expectations of behaviour. These children are inquisitive and develop a love of learning early on. They get off to a positive start. Pupils maintain their enthusiasm for their education as they progress through the school. They eagerly contribute to class discussions and teachers' questions. Pupils have a positive attitude to their work which means that learning time is rarely disrupted.

The school offers a range of rewards and individualised support to encourage high attendance. Pupils regularly attend school.

The school fosters a love of reading. Pupils read widely and often. They enjoy the opportunity to listen to stories read by their teachers. Pupils develop a strong appreciation of the underpinning moral and cultural themes in these stories. For example, pupils were able to tell the inspector about a previous book that their teacher read to them. This explored what it might feel like to be an evacuee.

Children learn phonics through the school's chosen programme as soon as they start in the early years. Staff deliver the programme consistently well. Pupils read books that are matched to their current knowledge of sounds. Pupils who need further support with phonics are given extra help to become more confident in their reading. Pupils develop into confident and fluent readers.

The way that pupils' personal development is catered for is a particular strength of the school. The school is committed to its motto of 'lighting the sparks' in its children. It provides a wide range of broader opportunities to help pupils ignite their own passions and uncover their individual talents. These opportunities include trips to museums and art galleries, local sports and debating competitions, woodland skills lessons and much more. The school takes great care to link their curriculum topics to different careers that pupils can aspire to when they are older. Pupils regularly visits places of worship so that they can develop their understanding of other cultures and religions. The school goes above what is expected to support older pupils during their transition to high school. For

example, staff remain in contact with families during former pupils' first months in their new schools to help these pupils settle in to life in Year 7.

Staff enjoy working at the school. The school helps them to manage their workload. For example, staff spoke positively about the extra time that they are given to carry out wider duties. Governors are effective in their roles. They have a clear understanding of their statutory duties and carry them out well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not developed some subject curriculums to the same level of breadth, depth and coherence as it has in others. This sometimes means that pupils do not learn as much as they could in these subjects. The school should review the design of these subject curriculums to ensure that pupils are taught a rich body of knowledge in a logical way.

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 May 2014.

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 [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	137512
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10291431
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	238
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Emma Nolan
Headteacher	Melanie Furness
Website	www.belthornacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	9 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed since the last inspection.
- A new chair of the board of trustees has been appointed since the last inspection.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.
- The school operates a breakfast- and after-school club. Trustees have the responsibility for overseeing these.

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 that 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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. He met with subject leaders and teachers. He visited lessons, looked at

examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.

- The inspector also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The inspector spoke with a group of trustees. The inspector also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school.
- The inspector looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. He observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- 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 took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- The inspector made himself available to parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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