

Inspection of a good school: Lever Park School

Stocks Park Drive, Horwich, Bolton, Lancashire BL6 6DE

Inspection dates: 14 and 15 May 2024

Outcome

Lever Park School continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Matthew Taylor. This school is part of the Bolton Impact Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul Hodgkinson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Keith Davies.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils receive a warm welcome into school each day. They feel safe and happy knowing that there are trusted adults around them who they know will listen to and support them. Staff treat each pupil with respect and care. Pupils, who shared their views with inspectors, said that staff value and accept them for who they are. Pupils have the guidance and support that they need to grow and to flourish.

Many pupils join Lever Park School having had negative experiences in their previous schools. In this school, they have a fresh start. They know that staff treat them as individuals. Staff help pupils to manage their emotions and behaviour. This approach has resulted in a calm and respectful environment. If pupils fall out, staff intervene quickly to help them to resolve the problem and to move on.

Pupils enjoy the many opportunities that the school offers. They enjoy learning and are eager to know more. As well as academic and vocational subjects, pupils also learn life-skills. They learn how to manage money and how to live independently. Pupils gain in confidence and rise to the high expectations that the school has for their achievement. Pupils mainly achieve well in a range of subjects.

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

Since the previous inspection, the school has further developed and refined its curriculum. All pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan at Lever Park. The school has ensured that the curriculum meets the wide variety of pupils' special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The curriculum is carefully organised to allow pupils the time that they need to deepen their knowledge. Pupils have opportunities to apply and connect

this knowledge. For example, they relate conditions in Victorian times to current social issues. Pupils achieve highly in most subjects. In these subjects, the school has ensured that the curriculums are well thought through and embedded. However, in a minority of subjects, the curriculum is still in an early stage of development. In these subjects, pupils have not had the opportunity to gain any qualifications.

Teachers share resources and work well together. They know how to ignite pupils' interest and excitement for learning. Teachers use a range of assessment strategies to check that pupils' knowledge is secure. They use this information to plug any gaps in pupils' knowledge and to shape future teaching.

There is a strong culture of reading in this school. Pupils read widely in all subjects. Pupils who are at the early stage of learning to read or who are struggling with comprehension benefit from additional support to strengthen their reading knowledge. Pupils read novels, poems, plays and non-fiction texts throughout the curriculum.

Good attendance is a top priority for the school. A high number of pupils have had very poor attendance in their previous schools. The school uses detailed analysis of attendance data to identify and solve any issues. It works with each pupil to identify their individual barriers to attendance and to find what will work to improve their attendance. The school's tenacious approach has enabled most pupils to improve their attendance.

The school has placed the personal development of each pupil at the heart of the curriculum. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in the community and when they are online. They learn about positive relationships and what consent means. Through visiting places of worship, pupils understand the similarities and differences between different religions. The school also ensures that pupils step out of school and enjoy the world that they live in. Visits to the beach, parks, farms and museums are enjoyable but also help pupils to relate to characters in their novels or to reinforce what pupils are learning in school.

The vocational curriculum gives pupils opportunities to gain qualifications as well as to explore possible future pathways. For example, in the motor vehicle workshop, pupils have jobs to complete, such as fixing a new tyre onto a car. Pupils have responsibilities on the school farm, for example, to feed animals and to complete routine maintenance. They also have independent careers' information and lessons to explore their post-16 options. They are ready for their next stage of education and move on to a range of colleges, training providers and apprenticeships.

Members of the trust attend local governing body meetings to ensure that they keep fully informed about the school. Governors are strategic but also assure themselves through regular school visits that systems and procedures are working as intended.

Staff appreciate the support that they receive from school leaders and the trust. Staff appreciate that their workload has been reduced through the sharing of curriculums and resources across the trust.

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 minority of subjects, the curriculum is at an early stage of development and pupils have not had the opportunity to gain relevant qualifications. This means that some pupils have been disadvantaged when considering their future post-16 options. The school should ensure that the curriculum becomes embedded in these subjects so that pupils can achieve all that they are capable of and enjoy a wider choice of destinations when they leave the school.

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 April 2019.

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	142766
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10348328
Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	104
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Nick Hockenhull
CEO of trust	Paul Hodgkinson
Headteacher	Matthew Taylor
Website	www.boltonimpacttrust.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Bolton Impact Trust.
- The school does not use alternative provision for pupils.
- All pupils have an EHC plan. The school caters for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a temporary site for Year 7 and Year 8 pupils at Barlow Park Ave, Bolton.

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 met with the CEO of the trust, headteacher, senior school and trust leaders, subject leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body. An inspector also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, including early reading, mathematics and art and design. For each deep dive, inspectors 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.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and visited some vocational subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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 reviewed a range of documents, including policies and analyses of pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to some pupils and staff about the school. They also observed pupils during lunch and breaktimes.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff. They also considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses. An inspector also spoke with a parent. There were no responses to the pupil survey to consider.

Inspection team

Julie Bather, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Louise McArdle

His Majesty's Inspector

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