

Inspection of an outstanding school: Firs Primary School

Firs Road, Sale, Cheshire M33 5EL

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are kind and well-mannered. They value the positive relationships that they have with staff. Pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), make a significant contribution to the calm and respectful atmosphere that exists at the school. They extend a warm welcome to new arrivals. This helps pupils who are new to the school to settle in quickly. Pupils are happy here.

Pupils respond well to the high aspirations that the school has for their achievement. This includes pupils who benefit from the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision).

There is an impressive range of activities for pupils' wider development. These make a strong contribution to the development of pupils' talents and interests. For example, pupils create podcasts to teach their peers about the school's values alongside music, well-being and sports clubs. Pupils enjoy trips that enhance their understanding of the subjects that they study. These include visits to museums and sites of local interest. This helps pupils to deepen their knowledge of Victorians, the history of transport and how to stay safe.

Pupils relish the opportunities that they have to take on leadership roles. For example, they act as sports leaders, school councillors and peer mentors. Pupils become confident and independent young people. They are excellent ambassadors for the school.

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

The school has created an ambitious curriculum. It has set out in detail the important information that pupils should learn. In the early years, children receive the support that

they need to make a strong start to their education. This equips them well for the demands of Year 1. Most pupils are well prepared for each stage of their education. The published data does not reflect the strengths of the educational offer at this school. In 2023, the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 was significantly below the national average. A high proportion of pupils in this year group joined the school at various stages throughout key stage 2. In addition, the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that these pupils did not have time to benefit from the school's well-designed curriculum. Since then, the school has successfully navigated a period of rapid expansion. The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly during the year prior to this inspection. Most current pupils achieve well.

Staff make regular checks on what pupils know and remember. However, at times, the misunderstandings that some pupils develop about their learning are not addressed promptly. This means that some pupils move on to new learning before they are ready.

Staff use their strong subject knowledge skilfully to design activities that help most pupils to learn the curriculum well. The school accurately identifies the additional needs of pupils with SEND. It uses this information diligently so that pupils with SEND, and pupils who speak English as an additional language, can access the full curriculum alongside their peers.

The school has a precise understanding of the reading needs of each pupil. It has established a clear programme to support pupils to develop their early reading. Children in the Nursery class build their vocabulary by joining in with stories, rhymes and songs. Most pupils benefit from the reading programme that the school has put in place, which begins as soon as pupils start in the Reception Year. At times, staff do not routinely address the gaps that some pupils have in their phonics knowledge. This prevents these pupils from catching up with their reading as quickly as they could. The books that pupils read are carefully matched to the sounds that they already know. This helps most pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

Pupils enjoy reading. The books that they read make a valuable contribution to their understanding of the world. For example, they learn about the importance of teamwork, friendships, trust and the many differences that exist between people. Pupils recall these themes accurately over time.

Pupils work extremely well together during lessons. They respect each other's views and opinions. The school provides a small number of pupils with highly intelligent support to improve their behaviour. Staff are quick to respond to pupils who are absent from school. They build positive relationships with parents and carers and provide the necessary support to ensure that pupils attend regularly.

The school makes sure that pupils benefit from an impressive personal development programme. Pupils know how to care for their physical and mental health. They know the signs of a healthy relationship and how their body changes as they grow. Pupils embrace and celebrate the diverse range of cultures that exist at the school.

Governors have an accurate understanding of the performance of the school. This helps them to carry out their roles effectively. Staff value the consideration that the school has for their well-being. For example, they welcome opportunities to work closely with each other when they develop the curriculum. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. Parents hold the school in high regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- On occasion, the school is not quick enough to identify and rectify the gaps and misconceptions in some pupils' knowledge. This means that these pupils move on to new learning before they are ready. The school should ensure that staff address any misconceptions quickly and successfully so that pupils build their knowledge securely.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 outstanding in July 2017.

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	106303
Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	10321304
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	600
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Marilyn Reynolds
Headteacher	Sarah Bryan
Website	www.firsprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	12 and 13 July 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has specially resourced provision for 20 pupils with SEND aged between five and 11 years. The specially resourced provision supports pupils with specific learning difficulties, behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and autism. At the time of the inspection, there were 20 pupils on roll in this provision. Each of these pupils has an education, health and care plan.
- The school does not make use of any alternative providers for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time inspection 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 headteacher and leaders of SEND, behaviour, attendance and pupil welfare.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with the governing body, including the chair.

- The lead inspector spoke with the local authority head of SEND and inclusion. He also spoke with two school improvement partners.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and computing. For each deep dive, the inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at a sample of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. They considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They took account of the responses from staff and pupils to Ofsted's online surveys and gathered the views of staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.

Inspection team

Andy Cunningham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Travis

Ofsted Inspector

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