

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Dame Ellen Pinsent School

Ardencote Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham, West Midlands B13 0RW

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 June 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?

Strong relationships lie at the heart of this warm and welcoming school. Pupils receive great care, support and understanding here. This is because all staff know pupils, families and carers exceptionally well. Consequently, pupils are happy and safe at The Dame Ellen Pinsent School.

The school has high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Unkind behaviour is rare. Concerns are resolved quickly. Pupils display the school values, such as kindness, independence, respect, determination and patience. Pupils earn points and rewards for their house team when they display these values. They are excited to win the house trophy at the end of each week. Pupils behave well and show respect towards each other.

The varying and complex needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well understood by staff. The school work closely with a wide range of external agencies to put in the right provision for pupils quickly. As a result, the needs of pupils and their families are well understood and supported by the school.

Pupils' talents and interests are nurtured. For example, some pupils learn the violin and perform at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Pupils also experience a wide range of lunchtime clubs, such as dance, board games and tennis.

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

The school is ambitious for all pupils. Leaders and governors have a strong moral purpose. They are committed to supporting the needs of pupils with SEND in their school and across their local community.

The school has designed a curriculum focused on developing pupils' independence and confidence, including in the early years. It provides pupils with a breadth of wider experiences. This helps pupils to interact with the world around them.

The curriculum is taught across three learning pathways. These pathways support pupils with similar needs to learn together. In many parts of the curriculum, the school has thought carefully about what pupils will learn and in what order, such as in English and mathematics. However, this is not the case in all subject areas. In some parts of the curriculum, the school has not defined the precise knowledge, skills and vocabulary they want pupils to know. This means that pupils are not building their knowledge over time in a clear logical way. This slows some pupils' learning.

In lessons, the curriculum is well resourced. Teachers deliver interesting activities and experiences. Pupils' individual interests are taken into consideration. Pupils behave well and are highly motivated to learn. In many lessons, planned learning activities identify the most important small steps of knowledge teachers want pupils to learn. However, in some lessons, learning activities focus on experiences for pupils, but do not precisely identify the important knowledge or skills they will learn. Where this is the case, it limits some pupils' academic potential.

The school places strong emphasis on teaching pupils how to read. Staff teach phonics with accuracy. Pupils who are falling behind receive additional support quickly. Pupils not yet ready to learn through a formal phonics programme are well supported. Pupils are enthused by books. They regularly access the school library and classroom reading corners.

The school is committed to meeting the complex communication needs of pupils. Dedicated and highly skilled specialist staff offer support to pupils and teachers. They identify the most appropriate communication systems for individual pupils early. These systems include symbols, picture exchange and signing. However, there is variability and inconsistency in how agreed communication strategies are implemented in some classrooms and at other times of the school day. This means that some pupils are not able to consistently communicate their thoughts and needs during different parts of the school day.

The curriculum to support pupils' wider development is impressive. The school have thought carefully about the wider opportunities they offer pupils. Pupils experience up to 50 different outdoor ventures throughout their time in school. Pupils support local food banks and spend time at local care homes. All of this supports pupils to develop their confidence and resilience.

Leaders and governors pay close attention to pupils' attendance. As a result of the school's work, pupils' attendance is strong and is improving further.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the support and education their children receive here. The school is held in high regard within the local community, local authority and by external professionals.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some staff do not consistently implement the agreed communication strategies in their classrooms and across school. This means that some pupils are not able to consistently communicate their thoughts and needs during different parts of the school day. The school should ensure the intended communication strategies are implemented consistently throughout school.
- In some parts of the curriculum, the school have not defined the precise knowledge, skills and vocabulary they want pupils to learn over time. This means that pupils are not building their knowledge and skills in a clear sequential way. The school should ensure that they clearly identify the specific knowledge, skills and vocabulary they want pupils to learn and remember in all areas of the curriculum.
- In some lessons, learning activities focus on experiences for pupils, but do not precisely identify the important knowledge or skills teachers want pupils to learn. This slows some pupils' learning and limits their full academic potential. The school should ensure that the work teachers give to pupils precisely identifies the important knowledge and skills and enables them to build on what they know and can do.

Background

When we have judged 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in December 2013.

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	103615
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10294489
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation special
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Andy Punch
Headteacher	Denise Fountain
Website	www.dameellenpinsent.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- All pupils have an education, health and care plan. The primary area of need includes cognition and learning, and speech, language and communication needs. Pupils also have associated needs, such as physical, sensory and medical needs.
- The school do not use any alternative provision.

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.
- The inspectors met with the headteacher, senior leaders, the chair of governors, additional representatives from the governing board, subject coordinators, teachers and pupils. They also talked informally with passenger assistants, drivers and staff.

- The lead inspector spoke with a school improvement consultant, a behaviour consultant and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, communication, personal, social, health and economic education and history. 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. The inspectors also looked at additional subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The lead inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- 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 responses to the online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View. This included free-text comments. Inspectors also looked at responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents provided by the school, including the school's self-evaluation, school policies and curriculum documents.

Inspection team

Anna Vrahimi, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alexander Laney

His Majesty's Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024