

Inspection of Blacklow Brow School

Blacklow Brow School, Tarbock Road, Huyton, Liverpool, Merseyside L36 5XW

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Good

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected

Ofsted has not previously inspected Blacklow Brow School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Blacklow Brow Primary School to be inadequate, before it opened as Blacklow Brow School as a result of conversion to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils like coming to Blacklow Brow School. They say that it is a wonderful and welcoming place to be. Parents and carers appreciate the support and care that staff provide. One parental comment, typical of many, states that children have 'been given the best possible start in their education'. Pupils, parents and staff enjoy feeling part of a large family where they all feel respected and valued.

Leaders and staff set high expectations for all pupils. Pupils do not let them down. They try their best in all aspects of their learning and school life. Pupils understand the importance in aiming high and never giving up. Leaders have made sure that pupils are equipped to become motivated and respectful citizens of the future. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. They are prepared well for the future.

Pupils' behaviour across the school is exemplary. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff ensure that they feel safe and happy at all times. They learn how to stay safe across the curriculum. Bullying is extremely rare. Pupils know that adults will deal with any incidents quickly and thoroughly if they should ever occur.

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

Leaders, governors and trustees have developed an ambitious and interesting curriculum. The curriculum gives pupils, including those with SEND, the knowledge that they need to succeed. Leaders have also made sure that the curriculum is enriched through a wide range of opportunities that prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils experience a range of trips, and different visitors come into school.

In most subjects, leaders have thought carefully about the important knowledge they want pupils to learn and the order in which it will be taught. This helps pupils to know and remember more. However, curriculum plans in some subjects do not make it clear how children in the early years are prepared for the subjects that they will study in key stage 1. In addition, in a small number of subjects, staff do not check what pupils remember from what that have been taught previously.

The trust has provided strong support to subject leaders. This has helped to deepen their subject knowledge. Many subject leaders know how well pupils are achieving in their subject. They support staff, check pupils' work and, if necessary, adjust curriculum plans. In some subjects, leaders are not clear if the curriculum plans are having the intended impact on pupils knowing and remembering more.

Leaders have made sure that reading is given the utmost priority. Staff make sure that children quickly develop a thirst for reading. As pupils move up through the school, this is built upon extremely well. Pupils in Year 6 said that 'all pupils at this school absolutely love to read'. At the start of Reception, children are taught phonics. The phonics programme is well structured and systematic. Staff have

strong subject knowledge. They use this well to plan activities to meet pupils' individual needs. Staff select books that are well matched to the sounds that pupils already know and are learning in class. Leaders check the progress that pupils make, and extra help is given to any pupils who need to catch up. As a result, pupils achieve well in reading.

Leaders, staff and governors share a common, ambitious goal for all pupils to become well-rounded and educated young citizens. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and impeccable behaviour. They talk maturely and confidently about a range of issues, for example the impact of peer pressure and respecting differences in others. Pupils take on the many positions of responsibility that they are given with pride.

At the end of the school day, pupils are invited to attend a range of different enrichment opportunities. Examples are sports, cookery, yoga and mindfulness classes. Leaders monitor pupils' attendance at these classes, especially pupils with SEND. They do their best to encourage pupils to be involved. At the end of the academic year, pupils' attendance is celebrated with parents and carers. Pupils wear gaps and gowns and receive bronze, silver and gold awards.

Leaders, governors and trustees place a high priority on monitoring staff workload and well-being. Staff are positive about leaders. They believe that they are well supported and respected. Staff particularly appreciated the 'survival packages' that they were sent during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have made sure that all staff know that their number one priority at the school is to keep children safe. Staff are vigilant and report all concerns. In assemblies and lessons, staff tell children that they need to make sure that 'they are happy and feel safe'. Through the curriculum, pupils learn how they can stay safe online and in their community.

Safeguarding is woven into all aspects of school life. Staff receive regular and up-to-date training. Leaders also provide focused weekly meetings with staff to keep them updated. This means they know what signs to look for and what they need to do when they have any concerns. School systems are thorough and are known by staff. Leaders make sure that staff are confident using them. Records seen are detailed and organised. They show the quick actions that staff take to support pupils and their families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders do not fully understand how their subject starts in the early years. It is not clear how children in the early years are prepared to study

subjects in key stage 1. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders know and understand how subject knowledge builds from the early years. This will ensure that pupils' knowledge builds on what they already know.

- In a small number of subjects, leaders do not have a deep understanding of how they should evaluate and review. This means they do not know whether pupils know and remember more. Leaders should ensure that plans for improvement are precise and enable leaders to check that curriculum plans have the intended impact.
- Assessment in some subjects is not matched well to the core knowledge that pupils will learn across the school. This means that staff do not identify gaps in pupils' learning as they progress through the school. Leaders should ensure that assessment systems in these subjects are developed. This will allow teachers to check pupils' learning over time to ensure that they know and remember more.

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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144355
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10204466
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Damian McGann
Executive Headteacher	Damian Kenny
Website	blacklowbrowschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

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

Information about this inspection

The inspector(s) carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the record of required checks carried out on school staff. They met with the person responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the staff work to keep pupils safe.
- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors spoke with the executive headteacher, the chief executive officer and the academy director of the Trust. They also spoke with senior leaders, the business manager and the chair of the governing body.

- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the record of required checks carried out on school staff. They met with the person responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the staff work to keep pupils safe.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding. They also reviewed case files.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at break times and lunchtimes. They also observed pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 85 responses to Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View, and the 85 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. Inspectors also spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- Inspectors considered the 23 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors completed deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history, and design and technology. They talked with the leaders of these subjects and looked at curriculum plans. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at examples of pupils' work. They also talked with teachers and pupils about what pupils were learning.

Inspection team

Julie Barlow, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Lisa Hesmondhalgh

Ofsted Inspector

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