

Inspection of a good school: Mereside Primary Academy

Langdale Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 4RR

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 July 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good 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.

The headteacher of this school is Samantha Upton. This school is part of Fylde Coast Academy 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), Dean Logan and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Gutteridge.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school is central to the local community that it serves. Pupils are happy and enjoy coming to school. They said that they enjoy playing outdoors and socialising with their friends. Pupils trust their teachers to care for them, including when they need comfort or reassurance.

The school is ambitious for pupils to achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, on occasion, some teachers do not deliver the curriculum as well as intended. This means that some pupils do not progress through the curriculum as effectively as they could.

In the main, pupils behave well during lessons and around school. Staff encourage them to behave sensibly and to treat others with respect. Teachers step in quickly when pupils need help to follow the school's rules or to regulate their own emotions. This ensures that pupils' behaviour is addressed sensitively and effectively.

Beyond the school curriculum, pupils access a range of activities that benefit their wider development. For example, pupils take part in a range of trips, and they learn to play musical instruments. Pupils also learn how to care for living things, including Fudge, the school's therapy dog. This helps pupils to develop empathy and to broaden their interests.

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

Many changes have taken place to the curriculum since the previous inspection. However, the school has paid close regard to the impact of these changes on staff's well-being. Teachers reported that the school acts positively to help them to manage their workload.

Teachers quickly forge warm relationships with children when they join the Nursery and Reception classes. They use a range of appropriate checks to establish any barriers to learning that pupils may have. The additional needs of pupils with SEND, including speech, language and communication needs, are accurately identified. In the main, these pupils benefit from the support that they receive.

The school has developed an ambitious and well-thought-out curriculum in many subjects, from the beginning of the early years to Year 6. In these subjects, the school has considered carefully what it wants pupils to know and the order in which this content should be taught. However, there is some variability in how staff deliver some subject curriculums. For example, they do not design some learning activities well to help pupils to acquire important knowledge. At times, staff do not teach subject content in a logical and coherent manner to help pupils to build their knowledge. Consequently, pupils' knowledge and understanding of important concepts in some subjects is insecure.

In the main, teachers explain new learning clearly. They choose appropriate resources to help pupils to learn. However, teachers' ability to pinpoint gaps in learning are at various stages of effectiveness. Sometimes, the checks on what pupils have learned and remembered over time do not identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge or where they have developed misconceptions. This slows pupils' learning and hampers the depth of subject knowledge that some pupils acquire.

Pupils learn phonics as soon as they start in the Reception class. Nevertheless, staff do not implement the school's phonics programme consistently well. The school has not ensured that teachers have the expertise to deliver the phonics curriculum effectively. The school does not provide some pupils in key stage 1 and beyond with books that match their current reading knowledge. These books are sometimes too difficult for pupils to practise the sounds that they already know. Consequently, some pupils struggle unduly when at the early stages of learning to read. Those who need support to catch up receive extra help, but this sometimes does not meet their needs. As a result, pupils do not overcome the gaps in phonics knowledge well enough. These pupils do not become fluent readers as quickly as they should.

Typically, pupils are considerate towards each other and towards staff. They try their best to listen attentively during lessons and to answer questions. Staff support children in the Nursery and Reception classes to learn well-established routines. Children in the provision for two-year-olds settle in quickly. This helps them to learn and to play cooperatively alongside each other.

The school is alert to the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending regularly. It has developed clear procedures to manage attendance and punctuality. For some pupils

who do not attend school regularly, the school offers effective support to families to reduce absence levels.

The school offers a wide range of opportunities that extend pupils' learning beyond their immediate environment. It organises a range of trips and clubs to help pupils to better understand the wider world. Pupils learn about the differences between people, including their religions and the make-up of different families. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn how to stay safe and how to protect their well-being. Pupils recognise that rules are there to keep them safe. These experiences prepare pupils well for their future lives.

The local governing board fulfils its duties effectively. There are effective systems in place to ensure smooth working between the local governing body and the trust. The trust has supported the school to improve the quality of education that pupils receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The delivery of the curriculum is variable. Some staff do not design suitable learning activities to help pupils learn subject content. This hinders pupils' progress in building a secure body of knowledge. The school should ensure that staff are suitably equipped to deliver the curriculum consistently well.
- Some teachers do not use assessment strategies well enough to identify what pupils have learned and understood before they move on to new learning. This causes gaps in some pupils' knowledge. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment techniques effectively so that pupils can successfully build on their prior learning.
- The phonics programme is not taught consistently well. Some pupils do not read books that match the sounds that they know. The support for pupils who struggle to read is not effective enough. This means that pupils do not learn to read fluently as soon as they could. The school should ensure that all aspects of the early reading programme are delivered consistently well so that pupils develop secure phonics knowledge.

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 predecessor school, Mereside Primary School, to be good in March 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	143771
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10348356
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	314
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Gutteridge
CEO of the trust	Dean Logan
Headteacher	Samantha Upton
Website	www.meresideprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	5 and 6 November 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Fylde Coast Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast and after-school club.
- The school offers provision for two-year-old children.

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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and with other school leaders.

- The inspector met with members of the local governing body and trustees, including the chair of governors and the CEO.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector discussed the curriculum in some other subjects and spoke with pupils about their learning in some of these subjects.
- The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult.
- 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 observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and documents relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their wider experience of school. There were no responses to the pupil survey to consider.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. She also spoke with some parents and carers during the inspection. The inspector also considered the emails that she received from parents.
- The inspector spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. She also considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.

Inspection team

Victoria Burnside, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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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

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