

Inspection of Birchfields Primary School

Lytham Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6PL

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel happy to be part of this caring and welcoming school. They have a strong sense of belonging and settle in quickly, including pupils who arrive at different points during the year. Pupils told inspectors that 'everyone in this school matters' and that everybody 'should have the same chances to succeed'.

The school has established a culture where there are high expectations for pupils' achievement, including for disadvantaged pupils and for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils typically rise to these expectations and most achieve well. They appreciate recognition and rewards for their efforts.

Pupils behave incredibly well during lessons and at social times. They have highly positive attitudes towards their learning. Pupils understand why the school's values and rules are important to life in school and beyond. For example, they spoke with clarity about resilience and how they try their best and aim high in all that they do.

The school provides pupils with a range of experiences. Pupils visit places locally and further afield such as museums, parks, local schools and other cities. These trips often link to what pupils are learning in the curriculum. Pupils also participate in a range of extra-curricular activities, including sports, music, cookery, computing and chess clubs.

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

The school has redoubled its efforts in designing a broad, knowledge-rich curriculum. It has determined the important knowledge that pupils should learn and the order in which teachers should introduce it from the start of the early years. This helps children in the early years to be well prepared for key stage 1.

Most pupils typically learn well across a range of subjects. Nonetheless, over time, the school has not placed sufficient emphasis on the development of pupils' written and spoken communication skills. As a result, pupils make mistakes in their spoken language and in their written work. These mistakes linger throughout their time at school.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge and deliver subject curriculums well. They have benefited from effective training and support. This enables teachers to design suitable learning activities. Staff regularly check how well pupils learn the intended curriculum. They use this information to address any gaps in pupils' knowledge. In a few subjects, the school is refining how it checks what pupils know and can do.

The school identifies pupils with SEND quickly and accurately. Staff work closely with parents and carers, as well as other professionals, to help pupils with SEND follow the school's full curriculum. The school provides bespoke learning pathways for pupils in the 'nest' and 'kaleidoscope' provisions to fully meet their individual learning and care needs.

Staff foster pupils' love of reading well. The school has constructed the curriculum around high-quality texts, which include representation of the communities that it serves. It has

recently improved its library so that it is well stocked and inviting. Older pupils help to decide on new book purchases. They read widely and enjoy completing quizzes of the books that they have read.

In the early years, children benefit from plentiful stories and songs. From the beginning of the Reception Year, staff implement the school's phonics programme with fidelity. The school has ensured that staff who teach early reading have had the required training and follow the agreed approaches. Pupils practise reading from books that match their phonics knowledge. Staff typically provide effective support for pupils who struggle with reading.

Staff forge nurturing relationships with pupils. In turn, pupils are courteous and greatly respectful towards others. This contributes to the harmonious atmosphere that pervades the school. Pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. The school works tenaciously, including with external agencies, to support the families of some pupils who are persistently absent from school. This joined-up approach is having a positive impact.

The school works closely with parents to ensure that they understand the statutory content of its personal development programme. Pupils learn how to look after their physical and mental health. They develop aspirations for their future careers, such as in teaching, medicine and archaeology. Older pupils take on leadership roles as prefects and eco-councillors. The school has firm plans to further enhance pupils' leadership skills and their endeavours in the local community.

Governors provide effective support and challenge to the school, with a sharp focus on the school's quality of education. Staff told inspectors that they are lucky to work at the school and that they feel valued. The school takes careful account of their workload and well-being. For instance, it listens to staff's opinions, facilitates collaborative working and has reviewed its feedback and marking policy.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not focused strongly enough on developing pupils' written and spoken communication skills. This hinders some pupils in developing fluency and accuracy in their speaking and writing. The school should ensure that its recently increased expectations for pupils' oracy and for their written communication better support pupils in improving these important skills.

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	130380
Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	10337677
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	620
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lucy Yeomans
Headteacher	Michael Cooke
Website	www.birchfieldsprimary.com
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 March 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, an interim headteacher and a new chair of governors have been appointed. The headteacher also leads another local primary school.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have

taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, English, design and technology, science and geography. In each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders and visited a sample of lessons. They spoke with teachers and with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work. They also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a familiar adult. He discussed reading with a group of older pupils.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other school leaders. The lead inspector held a meeting with governors, including the chair of governors. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation documents, improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and documents pertaining to pupils' behaviour and their levels of attendance.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at playtime, at breakfast club and during lunchtime. They spoke with several groups of pupils about their experiences at school and considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They met with some parents at the start of the school day.

Inspection team

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gaynor Rennie	Ofsted Inspector
John Littler	Ofsted Inspector
Katie McCaughey	Ofsted Inspector

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