

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Hardy Mill Primary School

Hardy Mill Road, Harwood, Bolton, Lancashire BL2 4EF

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Inspection dates:

26 and 27 November 2024

## **Outcome**

Hardy Mill Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils settle in quickly at this friendly and nurturing school. They develop a strong sense of belonging as soon as they start in the early years. Pupils are happy and they enjoy attending. They say that the best thing about their school is that their teachers make their learning fun.

The school has a culture of high expectations for pupils' achievement, including for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most pupils achieve well across a range of subjects. To celebrate and encourage their successes, the school rewards pupils with silver and gold awards, house points and 'Friday Honours'.

Pupils understand the school's values, which include respecting others and having pride and resilience in learning and in life. Pupils behave well. They learn about the importance of cooperating with others socially and while learning together.

The school provides pupils with various experiences that enrich their learning of the curriculum. For example, pupils enjoyed a recent trip to the seaside to compare different places. They take part in a range of clubs including dance, running, boxercise, art and choir. 'Mindful Monday' and 'Well-being Wednesday' sessions enable pupils to relax and take part in calming activities.

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

The school has continued to strengthen its curriculum. It has made sure that the curriculum is broad, balanced and ambitious. The governing body shares in the school's vision for high-quality education, and it places a sharp focus on continuing to improve. To this end, the governing body provides effective support and challenge to the school.

The school identifies pupils with SEND as soon as they start in the early years. Staff work well with parents and carers, and with external professionals, to get these pupils the support that they need. Pupils with SEND learn well alongside their classmates.

Staff foster a love of reading across the school. For example, the curriculum is based on carefully selected books. Pupils attend a weekly book club, and authors and poets visit the school to help pupils to appreciate the work of different writers. In their roles as 'reading buddies', some older pupils inspire their younger peers' enjoyment of reading.

Phonics is a particular strength of the school, which is reflected in the provisional 2024 outcomes of the phonics screening check. In the Nursery Year, children are immersed in rhymes and songs, which prepares them well for learning phonics in the Reception Year. Staff are well trained to deliver the phonics programme consistently well. They support pupils who struggle with reading, so that they learn all that they should. As a result, pupils develop into fluent and confident readers.

Teachers successfully build their subject knowledge with the coaching and guidance of the school. Overall, this helps them to deliver the curriculum well. However, on occasions, teachers do not explain new learning sufficiently well. As a result, some pupils do not develop a secure understanding of new vocabulary and concepts. In addition, the checks that staff make on pupils' learning are not consistent. Therefore, some pupils develop misconceptions and make some mistakes, including in their writing.

Pupils are courteous and well mannered, which contributes to classrooms and other school areas being calm and orderly. Most pupils attend well. If absence levels or lateness begin to increase, the school works tenaciously with families and with external professionals to remove any barriers and to secure improvements in pupils' attendance.

The school prepares pupils to become responsible and active citizens. For example, visitors to the school, such as representatives of world religions, help pupils to learn about diversity. As school councillors, pupils play an active role in improving the school and the wider community. They take part in litter picks, lead school assemblies, support their peers at lunchtime and raise awareness of anti-bullying. Pupils support a range of local charities. Older pupils recently designed and baked pasties for a local community kitchen. These endeavours support pupils' understanding of living in modern Britain.

Staff are positive about working at the school. They appreciate being part of a team where everybody is supportive of each other. Staff feel respected, knowing that the school considers and values their opinions. The school has set up a 'staff well-being team' to make sure that staff's workload and well-being are prioritised.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, teachers do not make their explanations of new learning sufficiently clear. This means that some pupils do not learn as well as they could. The school should help staff to better support pupils in understanding new vocabulary and concepts, so that they develop a secure understanding across the curriculum.
- The school does not make sure that staff check carefully enough how well pupils secure important knowledge. As a result, some pupils develop misunderstandings and make some mistakes, including in their written communication. The school should ensure that staff strengthen their checks on pupils' learning, to help pupils to develop the knowledge that they need for their next stages of education.

## Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 good for overall effectiveness in February 2015.

## 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

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| <b>Unique reference number</b>             | 105189   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                     | Bolton   |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                   | 10347941   |
| <b>Type of school</b>                      | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                     | Community  |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                 | 3 to 11  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                    | Mixed  |
| <b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b> | 313  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>               | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair of governing body</b>             | Adrian Smith   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                         | Jo Briggs  |
| <b>Website</b>                             | <a href="http://www.hardymill.bolton.sch.uk">www.hardymill.bolton.sch.uk</a> |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>         | 10 July 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005                      |

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new chair of governors has been appointed.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision for pupils.
- An external provider offers a before- and after-school club for pupils on the school's site. This provider is registered separately with Ofsted on the Early Years Register.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken this into account in his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector observed some pupils from Years 1 to 3 read with a familiar adult. He also discussed reading with some older pupils.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school, including at playtime and during lunchtime.
- The inspector spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school. He also took account of the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- The inspector met with the headteacher and other school leaders. He held a meeting with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority and the school's external improvement partner.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record and took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils. He considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. He also spoke with staff about their workload and well-being.
- The inspector took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- The inspector 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 levels of attendance.

### **Inspection team**

David Lobodzinski, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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