

Inspection of Pikes Lane Primary School

Gibraltar Street, Bolton, Lancashire BL3 5HU

Inspection dates:	7 and 8 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since June 2016. The school received an ungraded inspection under section 8 of the Act on 13 and 14 September 2023. Since September 2024, schools have not been awarded an overall effectiveness grade.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are polite and well mannered. They treat each other and adults with kindness and respect. Pupils celebrate the diversity that exists within the school and wider community. They feel safe and are confident that staff will help them if they have any worries or concerns.

The school is a place of calm where pupils meet the high expectations that staff set for their behaviour. Routines are well established from the moment that children arrive in the pre-school setting. Pupils understand the school rules. They support and remind each other to follow these. This results in the school being a place where pupils can be happy and can learn. The school motto of 'Together we can be the best' is the golden thread that runs through all that pupils do.

The school has prioritised the development of the curriculum. It is aspirational and determined that all pupils will learn well and be successful. The school's actions are beginning to make a difference in some subjects. However, pupils do not build their knowledge well enough across the whole curriculum, including in the early years. This is borne out in the published results for the end of key stage 2, which show that many pupils are not well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

Leaders are determined to ensure that pupils will receive a strengthened curriculum. However, it is too early to see the impact of this across all subjects. Many changes in leadership and staffing have hampered the school's progress in bringing about the intended improvements.

For some subjects, the school has not finalised its curriculum thinking. In these subjects, the school has not set out the fundamental knowledge that pupils need to know and when this should be taught. This leads to pupils experiencing a disjointed curriculum and means that they do not learn all that they should. As a result, pupils do not achieve well.

In contrast, where subjects have been developed, the knowledge that pupils should acquire is clearly laid out and builds logically. Some staff deliver this learning successfully so that pupils know more and remember more over time. However, some staff do not clearly identify gaps or misconceptions that pupils have. They do not address these swiftly, meaning that pupils are trying to build new learning on unstable foundations.

The school has improved its approach to teaching early reading skills. This has led to younger pupils making suitable progress through the phonics programme. Staff deliver the phonics programme well, and pupils, including children in the early years, enjoy learning early sounds. Well-trained staff provide prompt catch-up support, and books are matched to pupils' reading ability. This results in most pupils being fluent readers by Year 2.

The quality of education in the early years, including for children who attend the provision for two-year-olds, shares many of the features that pupils in key stages 1 and 2 experience. For example, children are not given prompt support to develop their early writing skills. There is an inconsistent approach by staff as to which writing tool to choose for children and how to best support their early letter formation and fine motor control. This weak start follows through into pupils' writing ability in later years. As a result, by the end of Year 2, pupils struggle to write using a cursive or legible written form.

The school quickly identifies pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Trained staff adapt the delivery of the curriculum to meet these pupils' needs, ensuring that they learn alongside their peers. Effective strategies help pupils with SEND to contribute fully to school life.

Lessons are calm and orderly, with pupils keen to learn. Adults and pupils have positive relationships, leading to good behaviour. Most pupils attend school regularly. The school works successfully with those who do not attend regularly to remove the barriers that lead to absence.

The school's provision for pupils' personal development prepares them well for life beyond Pikes Lane. They know how to stay safe online and maintain a healthy lifestyle, including looking after their mental well-being. Pupils enjoy the opportunities on offer to develop their talents and interests. They take part in clubs such as cookery, sports and choir. Pupils take pride in their leadership roles and community activities, such as litter picking and charity fundraising.

The governing body has overseen the decline in standards at the school. Governors have not appropriately challenged or supported the school. Staff appreciate that change is required and that this has increased their workload and had an impact on the well-being of the team. Most staff recognise that this is short term and will ultimately bring about improvements for the pupils and the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, and in parts of the early years curriculum, the school has not clearly identified the important knowledge that pupils need to know or the order in which it will be taught. This prevents pupils from building their knowledge securely over time in these subjects. The school should ensure that the curriculum is well designed so that pupils learn all that they should and achieve well across the curriculum.
- The checks that the school makes on pupils' learning do not identify gaps in knowledge sufficiently well. This means that some pupils move through the curriculum with

ongoing misconceptions. The school should ensure that teachers are equipped to use assessment strategies well so that pupils' learning is secure before they are introduced to new concepts.

- Some pupils do not master accurate letter formation by the time they leave Year 2. This hinders their writing fluency as they move through the key stage 2 curriculum. The school should ensure that children in the early years gain the fundamental knowledge that they need to form letters, so that pupils have the skills that they need to be successful writers by the end of key stage 1.
- Governors do not evaluate the school's curriculum well enough. Therefore, they do not challenge the school as effectively as they should. Governors should use information that they gather about the curriculum to challenge the school appropriately. In this way, they can fully support the school's actions to improve the quality of education for pupils.

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	105161
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	10337627
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	521
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Ruth Speak
Headteacher	Mathew Taylor
Website	www.pikeslaneprimaryschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 September 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There have been considerable changes at the school since the previous inspection. Many staff, including the headteacher, are new to post.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.
- The school runs a breakfast club for pupils.
- The school does not currently make use of any alternative provision 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: English, including early reading, mathematics, geography and religious education. They met with subject leaders and with teachers. Inspectors visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning.
- The lead inspector observed a sample of pupils from Years 1 to 3 reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other subjects. They met with leaders, spoke with pupils and reviewed pupils' work in these subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- The lead inspector spoke with members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with staff about their workload and well-being. They also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff.
- Inspectors met with leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documentation relating to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and around school.
- Inspectors met with parents and carers at the start of the school day. They took account of the responses to the online parent survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at the school. They took account of the responses to Ofsted's online pupil survey, including the free-text comments.

Inspection team

Sue Dymond, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Dawn Davies

Ofsted Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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