

Inspection of a good school: Little Bollington CofE Primary School

Lymm Road, Little Bollington, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4SZ

Inspection date:

1 March 2023

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. Inspectors are recommending the next inspection to be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils develop a real sense of community at this school. They work together, and with different local organisations, on varying events and projects. For example, they have recently developed a new garden area in their school grounds with the help of community partners. Older pupils who join the 'SOS crew' arrange lunchtime play activities for other pupils to join in with during their social times.

Pupils enjoy school. They particularly like the school's small size because they feel it helps them to form closer bonds with their teachers and classmates. Pupils are safe and staff care for them well. There is a culture of mutual respect between pupils and staff. Pupils rarely fall out and leaders deal with any bullying issues effectively. Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for behaviour. They conduct themselves sensibly around the school and in lesson time.

Leaders are ambitious for what pupils can achieve in reading, writing and mathematics. In these subjects, many pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), achieve well. However, this is not the case in many other curriculum subjects. This is because, beyond English and mathematics, leaders have not designed curriculums well enough to help pupils build their knowledge securely from the early years to Year 6.

From the Reception Year upwards, leaders arrange annual residential visits for each class to help pupils to develop their independence and confidence. Pupils appreciate these opportunities. However, pupils miss taking part in clubs and visits outside of school. Leaders have not found ways to resume many of these events since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions eased.

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

Leaders have recently introduced new subject curriculums in reading, writing and mathematics. They have ensured that, in these subjects, teachers have clear guidance on what important knowledge they should teach and how best to deliver subject content. This guidance also helps teachers to carry out effective checks on what pupils have learned. Pupils, including those with SEND, develop their knowledge securely over time in these subjects.

In other subjects and in the early years, leaders have not given the same consideration to the design of the curriculum as they have for English and mathematics. For instance, leaders have not identified the crucial knowledge that pupils need to learn in many curriculum areas. Furthermore, leaders have not taken sufficient account of how the school curriculum should be delivered to mixed-age classes. Teachers are often left to their own devices to decide what knowledge to teach and how to deliver it. They are not clear enough on what pupils should already know so they are unable to consider pupils' prior knowledge when designing learning activities. As a result, in many subjects and in the early years, pupils do not build their knowledge as well as they should.

In some subjects, leaders do carry out some checks to see how well the curriculum is delivered. These checks help leaders to evaluate the implementation of their subject curriculums and respond to any development points that might arise. However, leaders and those responsible for governance do not have much oversight of how the rest of the curriculum is taught. This means that leaders are not fully alert to, nor acting to address, some of the weaknesses in the delivery and design of many subject curriculums.

Leaders have recently invested in new reading materials for the school library and class reading corners to help promote a love of reading. Pupils enjoy listening to the daily story time read by their teachers. Leaders prioritise the teaching of phonics. They ensure that children learn through the school's chosen phonics programme as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Teachers are trained to deliver the phonics programme well. Pupils read books that are well-suited to the sounds that they know. Leaders arrange additional support for pupils that need extra help to close the gaps that they have in their knowledge of sounds. This support is effective in helping pupils to become fluent readers.

Leaders have ensured that staff are effective at identifying potential additional needs that pupils might have. Leaders act quickly to seek additional support for these pupils where necessary.

Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. This includes children in the early years. They behave well around school and at social times. They are kind and courteous towards each other.

Leaders arrange some opportunities for pupils' broader development. For example, pupils have attended a local rugby competition and participate in various community events. Pupils also learn how to maintain their physical and mental well-being. However, leaders do not provide for pupils' personal development as well as they could. The personal, social and emotional education curriculum is particularly ill-designed. For example, it does

not help teachers to prepare pupils as well as it should for the changes that they will experience in their bodies, nor does it help pupils to develop a secure understanding about relationships.

Those responsible for governance do not carry out some of their core functions, such as holding leaders to account, as well as they should. They are not well-informed about the quality of the curriculum. In general, they do not gather the information that they need to evaluate the work of leaders. At times, this leads to lapses in some policies and procedures that ensure effective operations within the school.

Leaders take account of staff workload and well-being. Staff appreciate these efforts and spoke positively about the recent improvements in this regard.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know how to identify any concerns related to pupils' welfare. Staff respond appropriately to any concerns. Leaders take appropriate actions to manage these concerns. Leaders work well with other agencies where necessary to provide any extra support that families might need.

Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not designed many subject curriculums beyond English and mathematics well enough. This includes the curriculum in the early years. Furthermore, leaders have not given enough consideration to how most subject curriculums should be delivered across mixed-age classes. This means that pupils do not build their knowledge securely over time. Leaders should ensure that they implement well-designed curriculums. They should also ensure that teachers are well equipped to deliver these curriculums consistently well.
- Some leaders, including those responsible for governance, do not have sufficient oversight of their areas of responsibility. This means that leaders do not have a clear understanding of the weaknesses in curriculum design and delivery. This also means that some school policies and procedures have lapsed or have not been developed with sufficient detail. Leaders should review the approaches that they take to ensuring effective school operations and overseeing the delivery of the curriculum.
- Leaders do not cater as well as they should for pupils' broader development. This means that pupils do not have a wide range of opportunities to develop their talents and interests. This also means that pupils do not develop a secure enough understanding of some aspects of relationships and sex education. Leaders should review the curriculum, and the wider opportunities that they offer, to ensure that pupils are better prepared for life in modern Britain.

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, Little Bollington CofE Primary School, to be good in January 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' 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	147810
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10275142
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Mason
Headteacher	Janet Gregory
Website	www.littlebollington.cheshire.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Little Bollington CofE Primary School converted to become an academy school in April 2020. When its predecessor school, Little Bollington CofE Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is now part of Chester Diocesan Academies Trust.
- This is a Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in March 2018.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection.
- The number of pupils with SEND has increased significantly in recent times.
- Leaders do not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- 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 conducted deep dives in these subjects: early reading, geography and mathematics. They met with subject leaders and teachers. They visited lessons, looked

at examples of pupils' and children's work and talked with groups of pupils about their learning. The lead inspector observed pupils read to a familiar adult.

- Inspectors also considered the curriculum, spoke with pupils about their learning and evaluated their work in some other subjects.
- The lead inspector spoke with a group of governors. The lead inspector also spoke with the chief executive officer for the academy trust. Inspectors also talked to staff about their workload and well-being.
- Inspectors met with the leaders who are responsible for attendance, behaviour and pupils' personal development.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils about safeguarding and their wider experience of school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of policies and documents related to pupils' welfare and education. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.
- Inspectors reviewed leaders' policies and procedures to keep pupils safe. They discussed safeguarding arrangements with leaders and staff. Inspectors also checked the school's records of the suitability of staff to work with pupils.
- Inspectors took account of the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for staff and pupils.
- Inspectors met with parents at the start of the school day and took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

David Spruce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

John Hanley

Ofsted Inspector

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