

Inspection of a good school: Blanford Mere Primary School

Mimosa Walk, Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 7EA

Inspection dates:

7 and 8 February 2023

Outcome

Blanford Mere Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

From Nursery to Year 6, pupils experience an inclusive, calm and welcoming learning environment. Relationships are strong and pupils generally get along well. Adults deal with any incidents of unkindness quickly. As a result, incidents of bullying are rare. Pupils spoken to are confident that, should it occur, bullying would be nipped in the bud by a trusted adult.

Leaders have high expectations for what all pupils can achieve. These are realised through a rich and varied curriculum. Staff encourage pupils to make links between the curriculum and their everyday lives. For example, they apply mathematics skills to help with shopping and learn how the Gunpowder Plot links to the local area.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They have positive attitudes to learning and take part in lessons with enthusiasm. Pupils benefit from a wide range of opportunities, such as inter-school competitions, trips and visitors.

Across the school, pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities. These include acting as peer supporters, digital leaders and rights respecting champions. Pupils value these roles. They talk proudly about the support they provide for others. For example, older pupils organise games and activities for younger pupils at lunchtimes.

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

Leaders have developed a curriculum that is ambitious for all pupils. It starts in the early years and builds across the school. Staff regularly assess pupils' learning. They quickly identify any gaps or misconceptions. They then adapt their teaching to address these. This approach helps to prepare pupils well for their next stage in learning. Staff generally have good subject knowledge. This means that they deliver the planned curriculum effectively.

Leaders and governors are focusing on the right things to improve the school's provision further. They have clear plans in place to support future developments. Governors are effective in their role, holding leaders to account and acting as critical friends.

In many subjects, such as mathematics, the curriculum is well developed. It is effective in helping pupils to develop their knowledge and skills. In a few subjects, however, a revised curriculum has only been introduced recently and it is not yet fully embedded. Subject leaders now have regular opportunities to check how well their subject is being taught.

Teachers explain new learning clearly. Subject-specific vocabulary is introduced and modelled effectively. As pupils work through topics, they use this vocabulary with increasing confidence. To further support pupils' learning, there is a whole-school focus to identify the most crucial knowledge and vocabulary that pupils in each year group should know and remember. This is in the early stages of development.

Leaders and staff help pupils to develop a love of reading. This includes regular story times and access to the school library. Early reading is prioritised through daily lessons in Reception and key stage 1. Staff continually check how well pupils are learning to read. They use this information to provide timely, additional sessions to help pupils keep up or catch up with their peers. Many pupils read to adults daily. Most books pupils read in class are well matched to their phonics skills. However, pupils do not use these books to practise reading at home. The books that pupils do take home are not as well matched to the sounds that pupils know. This slows the progress that some pupils make.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported to access the full curriculum. Leaders work with staff to identify and meet pupils' needs quickly. Recent training has helped staff to ensure that each pupil's individual development plan is sharply focused and reviewed regularly. Staff have an inclusive approach and willingly adapt their practice to support pupils with SEND. This has a positive impact on these pupils' learning.

Children in the early years get off to a great start. Adults take every opportunity to develop children's language and early mathematics skills. This can be seen throughout the day and the range of activities on offer.

Adults have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. These are applied consistently. As a result, pupils conduct themselves very well around school and in class, so that lessons are rarely disrupted. Pupils are polite and courteous to adults and each other.

The curriculum is designed to help prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Activities include the celebration of a wide range of religious and cultural events, raising funds for charity and opportunities to share and debate different views.

The great majority of feedback from staff, pupil and parental surveys is highly positive. Staff feel well supported by leaders, for example, through opportunities to work and plan together. This has a positive impact on their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Ensuring pupils are kept safe is a high priority for everyone. Staff are clear about how and when to report safeguarding concerns. They are alert to potential signs and symptoms of abuse. Staff are aware of local issues that may impact on pupils' safety. Senior leaders manage any concerns thoroughly. Referrals are followed up appropriately.

Leaders check that new staff are suitable to work with children before they start working in school.

The curriculum helps pupils to keep safe, both in the local community and online. For example, pupils are taught about stranger danger, water safety and healthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils in the early stages of learning to read do not routinely have access to books that are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. As a result, some pupils, particularly those who struggle with reading, do not make as much progress in learning to read as they could. Leaders should ensure that pupils have ready access to books that closely match their phonics skills to build confidence and fluency.
- Curriculum plans in some subjects are in the early stages of implementation. This means that pupils' learning in these subjects is less well developed. In all subjects, leaders have started to identify the important knowledge and vocabulary that pupils in each year group should learn. Leaders need to continue this work, so that the curriculum is embedded, and pupils develop and deepen their knowledge across all aspects of the curriculum.

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 school to be good in October 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

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| Unique reference number | 103792 |
| Local authority | Dudley |
| Inspection number | 10268855 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 3 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 337 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Allan Weaver |
| Headteacher | Kerry Crook |
| Website | www.blanford.dudley.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 24 January 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up appointment in September 2022.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school
- The inspector spoke to the headteacher, leaders, members of staff and pupils. The inspector spoke to two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, the inspector met with the subject leader, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also met with leaders and discussed a range of other curriculum areas, including computing, music and personal, social and health education.
- The inspector spoke to leaders, governors and staff about the systems and actions they take to ensure pupils are kept safe. The inspector looked at policies and school records. The inspector also spoke to pupils and observed the relationships between pupils and adults.
- The inspector met with leaders and staff to find out about: how well pupils' special educational needs are met, the wider curriculum and pastoral support.
- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted's online questionnaires for staff and pupils and Ofsted Parent View. This included comments received via the free-text facility.

Inspection team

Catherine Crooks, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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