

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Blackwood School

Blackwood Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 3PH

Inspection dates:

19 and 20 November 2024

Outcome

Blackwood School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Lindsay Charles. The school is part of the Central Co-operative Learning Trust, which means that other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Richard Simcox, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andrew Bailey.

What is it like to attend this school?

Blackwood School is an inclusive, caring school. There is a strong sense of belonging to the family of Blackwood. Pupils feel safe and secure. Staff celebrate the individual talents of pupils, and everyone is challenged to reach their personal best.

Across the school, expectations are high, and the academic standards pupils achieve are strong. There is always lots happening across the curriculum, from the annual cultural festival of an Eisteddfod, bringing together performance poetry, dance and singing, to the wide range of sports competitions. In this school, everyone is involved, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

The school's values of 'LEARN' (love, excellence, acceptance, respect and nurture) shine through daily life. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary; they show kindness and care for one another. Bullying is rare. If this behaviour is seen, staff and pupils work hand in hand to sort out issues calmly. The focus is on restoring positive relationships.

The partnership with parents and carers is notable. Parents get involved in school life through workshops, assemblies and celebration events. Together, school and parents work successfully to build well-rounded pupils who are prepared for their future endeavours.

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

High expectations and ambition in the school are evident. A positive welcome sets each day off for everyone. Relationships are respectful, and pupils work hard and try their best. This is a school that is focused on everyone's success.

From the moment children join the school in Nursery, there is a well-structured approach to getting them ready to read. Young children sing rhymes and songs; in this book and language-rich environment, children get off to a great start. The school keeps staff updated with the latest developments on the school's reading programme. As a result, pupils make strong gains in their reading skills. The books that pupils read match the phonics programme. If pupils fall behind, staff quickly identify this and provide additional support to help pupils catch up with their peers. Across the school, pupils access the school's library. Staff recommend reading books. For younger children, staff create suspense in new books by wrapping them up to make story time even more exciting. Librarians take diligent care of library and reading areas. The school works closely with the local library to promote reading challenges.

Learning across a broad range of subjects is well organised. Staff training, for example, in mathematics, history and computing results in pupils' knowing and remembering more over time. Staff routinely check what pupils know, and pupils are challenged to use wider vocabulary when sharing their ideas. Plans are in place to ensure that the curriculum in all subjects is sequenced and planned. In a few subjects, staff's subject knowledge is not yet consistent across the school. Consequently, pupil knowledge is less secure in those areas.

Pupils with SEND are well supported. The school's commitment to every pupil accessing learning from the minute they start school is apparent in all classrooms. The curriculum also presents pupils with challenges to stereotypes. For example, pupils meet many professionals and volunteers during the school careers week to discuss their roles. Diversity and inclusion are thoughtfully threaded through curriculum experiences.

Pupils regularly visit the local church to participate in events involving local schools. This brings together pupils from different faiths, celebrating together. Pupils recently released doves of peace at their remembrance commemoration.

There are many opportunities to learn outdoors in the school's well-maintained grounds. Beyond the classroom, pupils attend clubs at lunchtimes and after school. Pupils take on many different leadership roles, these help them develop as active citizens in school. They are proud to lead events in school and in the local community. They are active fundraisers who think of others. For example, as part of the bi-annual enterprise week, pupils plan, budget and make their items to sell. Pupils donate the profit to charities locally and nationally. The wide range of trips, visits and visitors enrich pupils, giving depth to learning.

Parents are very positive about the school. They value how approachable staff and leaders are and how well they care for and inspire their children. Communication with parents is effective.

Staff appreciate how well the school and trust support their development. Staff work well as a team. The school is considerate of workload, which brings out the best in teams across the school. Leaders' decisions at all levels, including the governing body, prioritise success for all pupils, ensuring that the school maintains its high standards.

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 foundation subjects, the curriculum is under review and staff expertise is less consistent. This means that pupils make less progress in these subjects than in others. The school should continue to build subject knowledge in all areas so that pupils build their knowledge securely across the whole curriculum.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school, (Blackwood School), the school to be good for overall effectiveness in October 2016.

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	148364
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10344178
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	671
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Bailey
CEO of the trust	Richard Simcox
Headteacher	Lindsay Charles
Website	www.blackwood-school.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in January 2023.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club called Woodpeckers; the board of trustees oversees this.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

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 the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- During the inspection, inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteachers, senior staff and other staff. The lead inspector spoke with the chair of the trustees, the chair, the vice chair, local governing body members, and the CEO.

- The inspectors focused inspection activity on the following groups of subjects: early English and mathematics, science, history and computing. Inspectors visited a sample of lessons for each group of subjects, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with subject leaders in other subjects.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, around school and at social times.
- 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 inspection took account of the views of parents and carers using the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- The inspectors also considered the opinions expressed through the online pupil and staff surveys.

Inspection team

Pamela Matty, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Chris Wright

Ofsted Inspector

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