

Inspection of a good school: Lowerplace Primary School

Kingsway, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 4UU

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 July 2024

Outcome

Lowerplace Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that their school is a happy, safe and kind place to learn. They benefit from the positive relationships that they have with staff and with each other. Staff know pupils and their families well.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), know that they can share their worries with staff. They trust that staff will resolve any issues between them and their peers quickly and effectively.

Pupils behave well in lessons, and they move around school calmly and purposefully. Staff support pupils to understand how to manage their own feelings and behaviour. For example, at playtimes, pupils can choose to access an inside space which is set up with activities to help them to be calm. With this support, pupils can meet the school's high expectations of behaviour.

Pupils have opportunities to take part in a range of clubs and leadership activities. They relish their appointments as librarians and school council members. Junior interpreters make a valuable contribution by helping pupils who speak English as an additional language to settle into the school well.

The school expects pupils to do well academically. Pupils typically achieve well in most subjects, as they benefit from a high-quality curriculum.

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

The school has developed a broad and balanced curriculum, which is accessible to all pupils. It has carefully identified the important knowledge that pupils need to learn. This knowledge has been broken down and organised well so that pupils can build on what they know from the early years through to Year 6.

In most subjects, teachers deliver the curriculum well, which results in pupils remembering what they need to know. Teachers use assessment strategies successfully to identify what pupils can and cannot remember. Teachers diligently revisit less secure knowledge, so that pupils have more opportunities to learn and remember it. In the early years, teachers design learning opportunities that prepare children well for the demands of key stage 1.

In a small number of subjects, some pupils cannot make links between new concepts and prior knowledge. This is because the school has not ensured that teachers deliver the curriculum in the most logical order.

The school's published data in 2023 shows that the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was below the national average. This was partly due to high rates of pupil absence and the considerable number of pupils who left or joined the school partway through the year. However, weaknesses in the previous phonics curriculum and its delivery also hindered pupils' learning. The school has taken swift and effective action to address these issues. It has refreshed the phonics curriculum and provided staff with high-quality training. As a result, current pupils' learning of phonics is much more successful.

The school places reading at the heart of its culture. It has developed the school library and other reading areas into vibrant places where pupils read interesting books by a diverse range of authors. Pupils enjoy listening to a range of books and stories. The school's early reading programme supports children in the early years, and pupils in key stage 1, to read with increasing confidence and fluency.

Many pupils are new to learning English as an additional language. The school has provided these pupils, and any other pupils who find reading difficult, with highly effective support so that they are rapidly catching up with their peers. Pupils enjoy reading widely and often. As a result, they develop into fluent and enthusiastic readers.

The school has effective systems for quickly identifying pupils with SEND and for providing the extra support that they need. As a result, pupils with SEND access the full curriculum and are supported to succeed.

Pupils benefit from a range of trips and visits, which are designed to broaden their horizons and expose them to a range of careers, role models and faiths. The school has carefully considered how this offer helps to give pupils varied experiences and opportunities. For example, Year 6 pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their residential activity trip.

Pupils are polite, well-mannered and welcoming. Pupils' behaviour rarely disrupts learning. When this does occur, pupils are confident that teachers deal with it. In the early years, children are keen to share their learning with staff and their peers. High-quality interactions with staff deepen children's learning.

The school is taking decisive action to improve pupils' rates of attendance. The school works with families to identify the barriers to pupils attending school and provides support

to overcome these challenges. However, this work is not making a big enough difference to some pupils. Absence levels remain high.

Staff workload is carefully considered. The school engages well with staff when considering any changes or improvements. Staff are proud to work at the school and to serve their community.

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, the school has not ensured that teachers deliver the curriculum in a logical order. This hinders some pupils from making secure connections between new concepts and what they know already. The school should ensure that teachers deliver the curriculum as intended, so that pupils can deepen their knowledge and establish secure foundations on which to build new learning.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good on in May 2019.

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	105777
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	10347982
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	513
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Dave Watson
Headteacher	Karen Martin
Website	www.lowerplace.rochdale.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	8 and 9 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school offers a breakfast club for pupils.
- There have been changes to the leadership team, including the appointment of the headteacher, since the previous inspection.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provision provider for a limited number of pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher, other leaders and staff.
- The inspector met with representatives of the local governing body, including the chair of governors.

- The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority, the school improvement partner and an external consultant who works with the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, early reading and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also spoke with leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects.
- The inspector spoke with pupils about their experiences of school and their views on behaviour and bullying. They also observed pupils' behaviour during lessons and at breaktimes.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and carers as they collected their children from school.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of evidence, including the school's self-evaluation documents and records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: 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.

Inspection team

Alex Reed, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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