

Inspection of a good school: The Brow Community Primary School

The Clough, Halton Brow, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 2HB

Inspection dates:

8–9 July 2021

Outcome

The Brow Community Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils said that being part of this school is like belonging to a happy, supportive family. Staff know pupils well. Leaders ensure that the many pupils in the school with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including those in the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision), benefit from effective pastoral support.

Pupils are friendly, polite and respectful. They behave well. Pupils play happily together at breaktimes. They enjoy exploring the school's wooded area.

Staff help to sort out problems if pupils fall out with their friends. Leaders investigate incidents of bullying thoroughly. However, some pupils, and their parents or carers, think that this sometimes takes too long to resolve.

Staff are vigilant. They provide effective support for pupils when they are feeling anxious. Pupils value the help that staff give them to recognise and deal with their worries.

In recent years, pupils have not achieved as well as they should have done. Some pupils do not read fluently. Some pupils cannot remember some important mathematical facts. This has been made worse by the disruption to pupils' learning during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. Leaders expect all pupils to do well at school and teachers are helping pupils to catch up. However, some pupils are catching up more quickly than others.

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

Leaders recognised that the previous curriculum was not effective. Pupils were not able to remember some of the important things that they need to know to move on to their next stage of learning. Leaders are currently designing a new curriculum that is more

ambitious for all pupils. In some subjects, however, the curriculum is still being constructed. This means that pupils continue to achieve less well than they should in these subject areas.

In some areas of the curriculum, such as history, leaders' curriculum plans are developing well. Leaders' plans for the curriculum, generally, set out what pupils need to learn and the order that they need to learn it. However, some curriculum plans do not contain enough detail so that teachers are clear about exactly what pupils need to know and remember. Added to this, some curriculum plans do not show how learning develops from the early years.

Weaknesses in the previous mathematics curriculum mean that some pupils have gaps in their mathematical knowledge. To address this, leaders introduced a new mathematics programme before the pandemic. Pupils, and children in the early years, are being supported to get back on track in their mathematics learning, despite the pandemic. Some pupils are getting better at recalling mathematical facts. However, because their new learning is not secure, they find complex mathematics problems overwhelming.

Leaders have introduced a new phonics and a new reading programme. Children begin the journey of learning to read as soon as they enter the Nursery Class. Many younger pupils are able to use the phonics knowledge that they have learned to recognise and read words. Older pupils can describe the reading books that capture their interest in their classrooms and in the school library. However, not all teachers have been well trained in the new phonics or reading programmes. This means that weaknesses remain in how well pupils learn to read. For example, some pupils in Year 2 do not read as fluently as they should do to enable them to access the rest of the curriculum. Many pupils do not read for pleasure.

The support plans that leaders provide for pupils with SEND are detailed and up to date. Teachers use these to plan learning activities that support all pupils in their class, including those with SEND. However, teachers across the school do not use assessment strategies consistently well to check what pupils know and remember of their learning. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND, including in those in the specially resourced provision. This hinders pupils from building on what they already know and can do. It hampers their progress through the curriculum.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. They attend regularly. Pupils focus well in lessons. Typically, they are not distracted from their learning. Well-trained staff provide suitable support for pupils, including those with SEND, who need help to manage their emotions or to focus on their learning. Pupils help their classmates when they spot someone is struggling. Pupils are also quick to celebrate when they recognise that one of their peers has excelled themselves or tried their best.

Leaders have ensured that the school's curriculum includes a rich variety of experiences for pupils. They have planned trips and activities carefully to broaden pupils' appreciation and understanding of the wider world. Pupils value this. They enjoy taking part in clubs and trips that contribute to their wider development, such as cricket or learning to cook outdoors.

Leaders and governors work well together. They ensure that there is a strong sense of community in the school. Governors support staff well. They take the well-being of staff and pupils seriously. However, governors have not checked that the curriculum supports pupils to learn as well as they should, especially in reading. During the pandemic, leaders have not carried out the same checks that they did previously to ensure that staff deliver the curriculum in the way that they intended.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and governors are well trained in how to ensure that pupils are kept safe. Staff recognise the importance of promoting pupils' mental health and well-being. They ensure that pupils access additional support when this is needed. They make effective use of the school's family support worker. They liaise with external agencies in a timely manner. Leaders keep meticulous records to check that the right support is in place for pupils and families.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe in school and at home. They learn how to cross the road and ride a bicycle safely. Community police officers show pupils how to keep safe while online at home.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are not able to read fluently and many do not read for pleasure. This means that some pupils struggle to access the wider curriculum, while for others they miss the chance to enjoy the pleasure of reading a book. Some staff do not have the necessary skills or strategies to support those pupils who find reading difficult. Pupils who have fallen behind are not catching up. Leaders need to ensure that staff are suitably trained to deliver the new reading and phonics curriculums.
- In some subject areas, plans for the curriculum have not been completed. They do not set out the knowledge that pupils must know and remember, including from the early years. This negatively affects how well pupils learn. Leaders need to ensure that they provide sufficiently detailed curriculum plans for teachers to use, so that they can deliver the curriculum effectively and support pupils in building up their knowledge from the early years to Year 6.
- Some teachers do not check carefully what pupils already know. As a result, teachers do not help pupils build up their knowledge as well as they could. This is particularly the case for pupils with SEND, including those pupils who attend the specially resourced provision. Leaders need to make sure that teachers check pupils' learning carefully and then use this information to ensure that all pupils, including those with SEND, learn as well as they can.

- Governors have not focused enough on the quality of the curriculum. They have not ensured that pupils are supported to learn as well as they should, especially in reading. As a result, the curriculum is not fully planned and pupils are behind in their reading. Governors must increase their oversight of the curriculum and ensure that they understand how well pupils are achieving across all subjects.

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 a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good school could now be better than good, or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 23 June 2015.

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 Ofsted Parent View information 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.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

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	111124
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10184002
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	149
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Elaine Main
Headteacher	Lindey Webb
Website	www.thebrowprimaryschool.com/
Date of previous inspection	23 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school has two specially resourced provision bases for pupils with SEND. The number of pupils with SEND on roll at the two bases, and in the main part of the school, has increased significantly over time. Some pupils attend the specially resourced provision on a part-time basis as well as another school. One of the specially resourced provision is for 14 younger pupils in key stage 1 and/or children in the early years. The other is for 10 pupils in key stage 2. All places were allocated at the time of the inspection. Pupils' primary need in these bases is communication and language. However, many pupils have complex SEND.
- A number of new governors have joined the governing body since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The impact of the pandemic was discussed with the headteacher. This was taken into account by inspectors in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and a group of governors, including the chair of governors. They also spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school central record of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and history. They talked with the curriculum leaders of these subject areas. Inspectors also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 28 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 23 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. They also considered the 21 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the 25 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Pennington

Her Majesty's Inspector

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