

Inspection of a good school: Bluebell Park School

Cawthorne Walk, Southdene, Kirkby, Liverpool, Merseyside L32 3XP

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 July 2023

Outcome

Bluebell Park School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attending Bluebell Park School are happy and settled. Pupils, including those in the early years and the sixth form, cherish the friendships that they make in school. They know how to get on with each other and they work well together.

Leaders deal effectively with any incidents of bullying if they should occur. Pupils feel confident to approach staff if they have any worries or concerns. As a result, pupils feel safe in school.

Leaders and staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and achievement. Pupils rise to these aspirations and strive to do their best. They respect their teachers and engage well in classroom activities. Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are supported to develop their independence and communication skills. This helps pupils to achieve their individual targets.

Pupils engage well with a wide range of opportunities that promote their personal development. They have recently enjoyed their choir performance in Prescott town centre. Pupils enjoy making and selling products for their local pop-up shop. They also relish opportunities to practise their communication skills during visits to local garden centres and superstores. Pupils attend residential and take part in charitable initiatives. This builds pupils' confidence to interact with others in a range of settings.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those in the early years and the sixth form. They have carefully considered the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of the pupils when crafting the curriculum. Pupils, regardless of their needs, achieve their personal and academic targets. Students in the sixth form also gain national qualifications, such as functional skills. Leaders have recently improved the curriculum, so that it is broad and rich.

The curriculum across all key stages, and in most subjects, is well designed to help pupils to build on their learning over time. However, in some curriculum areas, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that pupils should learn. As a result, some teachers are not as clear as they should be about the most important knowledge that they should teach. Furthermore, a small number of teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the new curriculum effectively. Occasionally, this prevents some pupils from learning as well as they should.

Staff know and meet the needs of pupils with SEND well. In the main, teachers break down pupils' education, health and care (EHC) plans into achievable targets. Teachers are very skilled at making sure that pupils learn what they should at the right time. Leaders use a range of assessment strategies to check if pupils are on track to meet their targets.

Communication is a high priority in school. Teachers and leaders take time to identify and understand the starting points of pupils. They use resources such as symbols and eye-gaze technology to encourage pupils to communicate effectively.

Those pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read follow a well-designed phonics programme. This means that pupils learn the letters and sounds that they need to become confident and fluent readers. For non-verbal pupils, teachers use songs and sign language to encourage word recognition. Many pupils, including students in the sixth form, read books that help them to practise the sounds that they learn. For pupils who are visually impaired, teachers use audio, sensory and tactile books to immerse them into stories. In the main, pupils enjoy stories and reading.

Staff have a deep understanding of pupils' emotional, physical, sensory and behaviour needs. They use sensory rooms and clearly defined routines to help pupils, including those in the early years, to regulate their behaviour. Consequently, pupils learn without interruption.

Pupils, including students in the sixth form, are prepared well for adulthood. For instance, students receive travel training to support them to travel safely and independently. Leaders also prepare pupils well for their next stage of their education. Leaders offer a 'Look to the Future' event, which is attended by a range of employees and educational providers. These visitors also offer impartial careers advice to all pupils in key stage 4 and 5. This helps pupils make well-informed choices about their future work, training and education.

Pupils enjoy learning about different workplaces. For example, they visit live radio stations, safari parks, leisure centres and museums. Pupils also appreciate the chance to complete horticulture work at the local farm. All pupils who leave school enter education, employment or training. Leaders help pupils to take part in a range of fundraising activities. For instance, food collection for foodbanks and clothes collection for the local hospice. As a result, pupils develop an appreciation for helping others in the community. Pupils take pride in representing their school community at the annual Liverpool Town Hall council meetings. This provides them with the opportunities to interact with different pupils across local schools.

Governors know the school and pupils well. They make sure that the quality of education is of a high standard and meets the needs of the pupils. Governors challenge and hold leaders to account. Staff feel well supported in managing their workload and addressing pupils' complex needs. Leaders are mindful of staff's well-being and support them in maintaining a good work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There are robust procedures in place to safeguard and protect pupils. Staff receive regular training and know the signs that may indicate a pupil is at risk of harm. The clear reporting and recording systems enable staff and leaders to act quickly when concerns arise.

Leaders work closely with a range of external agencies and professionals to keep pupils safe. They take effective action to ensure that the needs of pupils and their families are met well.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe when online and when interacting with others. They understand the risks around social media and the sharing of personal information. Pupils also know how to spot and avoid unhealthy relationships.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some curriculum areas, leaders have not identified the key knowledge that they want pupils to learn. As a result, some teachers are not as clear as they should be about the most important knowledge that they should teach. Consequently, on a small number of occasions, pupils are not learning the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders should clarify the specific knowledge pupils need to learn, so that teachers can design activities which help pupils to know and remember more.
- A small number of teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to teach the curriculum well. This occasionally inhibits pupils from learning as well as they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers receive the support that they need to help them design activities which build pupils' knowledge securely over time.

Background

When we have judged 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 in May 2017.

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	104495
Local authority	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	10240189
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Community special school
Age range of pupils	3 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	50
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Lexley McTigue
Headteacher	Jamie Campbell
Website	www.bluebellparkknowsley.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 and 4 May 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school caters for pupils with SEND. All pupils have an EHC plan. Pupils' primary needs are profound and multiple learning difficulty, severe learning difficulty and autism spectrum disorder.
- The current headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed in September 2017.
- Two assistant headteachers have been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school is part of the Merseyside Severe Learning Disability for schools' network.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll is rising. Therefore, the school has opened an additional off-site satellite provision at Eastcroft Park School.
- Leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken this into account in the evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in personal, social and health education, reading and communication, mathematics and physical development. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders about the curriculum in some other subjects and programmes of study.
- Inspectors spoke to members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. Inspectors also spoke to a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors observed children's and pupils' behaviour in class and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke with the leaders responsible for pupils' wider development, behaviour, early years, sixth form, careers and preparation for adulthood.
- During the inspection, inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding. They also spoke with leaders and staff about safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents and carers expressed through Ofsted Parent View. They also considered responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for pupils.

Inspection team

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