

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

Ashington Drive, Bury, Lancashire BL8 2TS

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 2025

Outcome

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

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is ambitious for the achievement of all pupils. It has created a broad and well-balanced curriculum, which means that pupils enjoy learning about a wide range of subjects. Across the curriculum, pupils typically achieve well.

Pupils and staff are proud to be part of this happy and harmonious school community. Pupils strive to embody the school values in all that they do. They recognise that this helps them to learn well and be a good friend. For example, pupils describe using the value of empathy to help any pupils who are feeling lonely or left out.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and at social times. They endeavour to live up to the high expectations of staff. In the early years, children respond to familiar routines and cues that help them to listen attentively and fully participate in learning.

Pupils participate in a range of additional clubs that both further their talents and introduce them to new skills. These include crochet and pottery club and a school choir, as well as sporting clubs and teams. The school takes appropriate steps to ensure that all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, can benefit from this offer.

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

The school has defined the body of knowledge that pupils should learn over their time at the school. Staff value regular opportunities to work with their colleagues to review the curriculum. This helps to ensure that the knowledge in each subject builds on what pupils have learned before. In the early years, staff design learning that prepares children well for key stage 1.

In many subjects, staff use effective methods to deliver new information clearly. They are skilled at adapting their teaching and the classroom environment to support pupils with specific needs, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, at times, the approaches used to share new knowledge with pupils are not as effective as they could be. Consequently, pupils sometimes develop misconceptions and do not learn all that is intended.

Where the curriculum is delivered well, staff employ a variety of effective techniques to check on pupils' developing learning. However, the school's approach to help pupils to remember knowledge over time is in the early stages of implementation. As a result, in some subjects, pupils struggle to remember their past learning. This means that they miss out on opportunities to deepen their knowledge by connecting new information to what they have learned before.

The school has a sharp focus on developing pupils' reading expertise. It ensures that staff are well-trained to successfully deliver the phonics programme. Reception-age children secure the foundational knowledge of sounds. This helps to ensure that, by the end of key stage 1, most pupils are confident readers. Those that are not receive the additional help that they need to develop their reading knowledge.

The school has successfully strengthened its approach to identifying and meeting the needs of pupils with SEND. These pupils achieve well from their starting points. However, the school recognises that there is further work to do to improve communication with parents and carers, so that they can understand the rationale and the impact of the school's work.

Pupils typically maintain high levels of attendance. The school works well with families to overcome any barriers that may prevent pupils from attending school as often as they should.

From the beginning of the early years, pupils benefit from the 'Pupil Charter', which contributes strongly to their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. This includes access to outdoor learning in the school's forest area, and visits such as to the seaside, a ski slope and the pantomime. Opportunities to develop responsible citizenship include working with the local community and raising funds for good causes.

Pupils' personal, social, health and economic education prepares them well for life beyond primary school. They know about the different cultures and religions found in modern Britain and demonstrate strong understanding of the importance of mutual tolerance and respect. Pupils learn the importance of healthy lifestyles. They learn about how to stay safe online and in their local communities.

In the recent past, there have been several changes in the leadership of the school. Throughout this time, the governing body has supported the school well. It has ensured that the school maintains a sharp focus on the quality of education that pupils receive, and that standards remain high.

Staff are firmly committed to the school. They are well supported to carry out their roles effectively without being burdened by excessive workload. Staff value the training that they receive, and the regular opportunities for collaboration with their peers.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- At times, new information is not presented as clearly as it could be. This means that some pupils develop misconceptions in their understanding that hinder their progress. The school should ensure that pupils' learning helps them to retain the key knowledge that they need.
- The school's approach to help pupils to retain knowledge over time is in its infancy. As a result, some pupils have gaps in their knowledge that undermine subsequent learning. The school should ensure that gaps in pupils' knowledge are identified and addressed, and that staff better support pupils to recall and build on what they have learned in the past.

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 school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

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	105295
Local authority	Bury
Inspection number	10347947
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	227
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Richard Ainsworth
Headteacher	Janine McGadie
Website	www.lowercroft.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 and 9 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the school was last inspected, there have been several changes to the senior leadership team of the school, including the headteacher.
- The school has reduced its published admissions number since the last inspection and moved to a single form entry model.
- The school does not make use of 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector held discussions with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors, the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff and pupils.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- 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.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, when moving around the school and during lunch and playtimes.
- The inspector also considered a range of documents and other information about the behaviour, attitudes and the personal development of pupils.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and the responses to the staff survey. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Charlotte Oles, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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