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

Mill Street, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 2TD

Inspection dates: 25 and 26 March 2025

Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is going through a lot of change. After a decline in standards, and high pupil absence, fresh leadership has brought higher expectations. Pupils are responding well to these. This shows in their very positive behaviour, increasing attendance and attentive attitudes to learning.

Pupils appreciate the school's recent work to improve their education and raise their aspirations. For instance, they like having consistent and ambitious expectations for the quality of their work. This helps them to get better at different subjects. Pupils take pride in their achievements. They also benefit from the different sports and clubs on offer.

Pupils feel safe at the school. They also feel valued because staff praise and encourage them. This helps pupils to feel good about themselves and what they can do. Relationships between pupils are positive. Disagreements between pupils happen occasionally, but staff support pupils to learn from experience and to develop empathy.

Leaders and governors put pupils' interests first. When necessary, they take decisive and effective action to bring about improvement in the school's work. Nevertheless, there is still more to do to develop the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in different subjects, and to increase attendance. However, the school has established a shared vision and ambition for all pupils to achieve well.

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

After a period of decline, the quality of the school's work is improving rapidly. This is because the school has made significant changes for the better. For example, it has

established a stronger curriculum and higher expectations for learning, behaviour and attendance. In addition, the identification of and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have improved. However, while standards are rising, some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Since the previous inspection, there have been high levels of pupil absence, and academic standards declined. The teaching of phonics slipped and pupils fell behind with their reading. Pupils' achievement in other subjects also dipped.

In the last year, things have improved.

The school has put a rigorous phonics scheme in place and has trained staff. There is a sharp focus on helping pupils catch up with lost learning. For example, all Year 1 pupils have been on a catch-up programme to plug gaps in their phonics knowledge. This is having a positive impact. In addition, the school has invested in new books and strengthened early years provision and now actively promotes reading across the whole school. As a result, pupils' achievement in reading is improving. However, it is early days. These new systems are not firmly embedded, and pupils still have more lost learning to make up.

The rest of the curriculum, from early years to Year 6, has been renewed. Staff have clear curriculum guidance to follow. In different subjects, the school now sets out what pupils should know and when it should be taught. Staff have had training in how to implement this new curriculum. Furthermore, there are consistent classroom routines that ensure pupils understand the expectations for their learning and behaviour. These changes have strengthened the school's offer and its ambition for what pupils should learn. The impact is evident in several subjects, for example in science. However, staff's knowledge of how pupils make progress through the curriculum in different subjects varies. This means staff are not making the most of the new curriculum in their teaching. Staff are not clear enough about what subject content to emphasise in their teaching, and why.

Following the previous inspection, the school's oversight of its work to support pupils with SEND lapsed. This decline has now been reversed. More recently, the school has done much to identify these pupils' needs accurately, provide appropriate support and lift expectations of what can be achieved. This is a significant step forwards and is raising the school's aspirations for all.

Alongside the changes to teaching and learning, leaders and staff are building pupils' sense of belonging and pride in their school community. The school also looks beyond the immediate area to teach pupils about the wider world. For example, pupils recently visited London as part of their work about fundamental British values.

Over time, many pupils have been absent too often, which means they miss important learning. In response, the school's leadership has established more rigorous procedures for challenging unnecessary absence. The school analyses attendance patterns, follows up unexplained absence promptly and contacts parents and carers about concerns. There are rewards for regular attendance and the improved curriculum helps the school to motivate

pupils to attend. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved. That said, a proportion of pupils still miss school too often for no good reason.

Staff appreciate the quality of leadership and the recent changes. They feel supported and guided to do their jobs well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Until recently, phonics and reading have not been taught with sufficient rigour. This has led to a decline in standards and expectations. The school has now put new systems and higher expectations in place, but it is still early days. The school should ensure that its teaching of phonics and reading leads to strong achievement by pupils.
- Staff's knowledge of how pupils make progress in different foundation subjects is not consistently secure. They follow the school's curriculum guidance but are not clear about which key knowledge to emphasise to pupils, and why. This holds back pupils' achievement in these subjects. The school should support staff to implement the new curriculum in foundation subjects to best effect.
- Too many pupils miss school too often for no good reason. This means they miss important learning and fall behind. The school should strengthen its work with families and professional services to support pupils to attend regularly.

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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 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	103776
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10343764
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	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tim Sunter
Headteacher	Russell Bond
Website	www.brierley.dudley.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school provides childcare at a breakfast club.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

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 has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector considered published data about the school. The inspector also looked at a range of school documents. These included information about pupils' behaviour, attendance, the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, school improvement planning, SEND, governance and documents published on the school's website.

- During the inspection, the inspector met with the executive headteacher, other leaders, school staff, pupils and governors. In addition, she spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority.
- 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 talked with pupils, parents and staff to gather general information about school life. She took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's and parents' views.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, at lunchtime, on the playground and at other times during the school day.

Inspection team

Diane Pye, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector

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