

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Meadowhead Junior School

Anglesey Street, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 4QG

Inspection dates:

14 and 15 January 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?

This is a nurturing school. Pupils and staff share an increasing sense of belonging. Parents and carers receive a warm welcome and value the opportunities to participate in events such as coffee and cake workshops.

The school has high expectations for pupils' achievement. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school has recently improved its curriculum to ensure it is appropriately ambitious for pupils. However, weaknesses in the previous curriculum mean several pupils have developed gaps in their learning over time. These pupils are not as well prepared for the next stage of education as they should be.

Pupils said that they feel happy and safe in school. Staff create a calm and purposeful environment where pupils can learn with minimal distraction. Pupils have opportunities to reflect on their actions and learn from any mistakes they may have made.

The school provides a varied offer of extra-curricular clubs, such as sports, crafts and music. Pupils enjoy various roles and responsibilities. For example, they can serve as prefects and act as representatives on the values committee. This enables them to increasingly take ownership of their learning and behaviours.

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

The school has recently improved its curriculum. It has benefited from the expert support to make sure that the curriculum outlines what pupils should know and when subject content should be taught. However, in some subjects, several pupils have gaps in their

knowledge as a result of the weaknesses in the previous curriculum. The school is supporting staff to check what pupils know and remember from their previous learning. Despite this work, some pupils, including those with SEND, continue to have gaps in their knowledge. This means that, over time, in these subjects, pupils' learning is insecure. Pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

Reading is central to the curriculum. The school consistently works to overcome any obstacles that hinder pupils from becoming fluent and proficient readers. This includes supporting those pupils who have gaps in their phonics knowledge. Books are evident throughout the school environment. Pupils express their enthusiasm for their favourite authors and the books they have explored together in class. Pupils who find reading difficult receive the support they need to catch up.

Pupils with SEND learn well. This is because their additional needs are identified quickly. The use of additional adults and adaptations made to the curriculum help pupils learn alongside their classmates.

At the start of the school year, the school implemented a new behaviour policy. This new strategy has led to a notable improvement in pupils' behaviour. Support is offered to pupils who previously had difficulty managing their emotions and behaviour. Pupils are recognised and rewarded for upholding the school's values. They are helped to understand the impact of their behaviour when they do not.

The school tracks and checks on pupils' attendance closely. It makes it clear to families that if pupils are not attending school, they are not learning the intended curriculum. When pupils have low attendance rates, the school looks into the underlying reasons. Despite this work, the number of pupils who are regularly absent from school remains high.

The school fosters pupils' awareness of their local community while also cultivating a broader understanding of the world beyond. Pupils engage well with after-school sports events and activities. These opportunities allow pupils to build their teamwork skills. It also serves to foster a sense of pride and achievement. Pupils are taught about respecting those who are different from themselves. They have a sound understanding of fundamental British values, and the school is equipping them well to be responsible citizens.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They state they have been supported with workload and well-being during a period of significant change in staffing and curriculum design. The governing body is knowledgeable about the school's strengths and improvement priorities. Members work closely with the school to provide support and challenge.

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, several pupils have gaps in their knowledge due to weaknesses in the previous curriculum. This makes it difficult for them to make connections with prior learning when they learn new content. The school should ensure that teachers use assessment strategies accurately, so gaps in pupils' learning are identified and addressed.
- Pupils' attendance rates are low. This means they miss out on learning opportunities. They develop gaps in their knowledge, which has a negative impact on their achievement. The school should further refine its attendance strategy, so it is more successful in removing the barriers that lead to absence from school.

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 September 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	119121
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10348133
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Steve Wolski
Headteacher	Christopher Dugdale
Website	www.meadowheadjuniors.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	24 and 25 September 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of one registered alternative provision.
- The current executive headteacher and assistant headteacher took up their one-year posts in September 2024.
- There have been many other changes to staffing since the previous inspection.
- The chair of governors took up the post in September 2024.

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 met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher for the school. The inspector also met with a range of teaching and support staff.

- The inspector met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair of governors, and held conversations with representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- The inspector took account of a range of other information, including the school's own self-evaluation, the school's improvement plan, school policies and minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- 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 considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also took account of the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Julie Brown, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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