

Inspection of a good school: Brackenwood Junior School

Norbury Avenue, Bebington, Wirral, Merseyside CH63 2HH

Inspection dates:

26–27 November 2019

Outcome

Brackenwood Junior School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to learn because they are interested in the topics that they study. Trips and visitors to school also enhance their learning. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of clubs. These activities help pupils to develop new interests and strong personal skills.

Despite pupils' eagerness to learn, leaders, including governors, do not have high enough expectations of pupils in some subjects. Pupils' outcomes show that they do not build sufficiently well on what they have learned in key stage 1. For example, attainment in reading has declined over time and is very low by the end of Year 6. Leaders have not addressed weaknesses in the teaching of reading. However, pupils' achievement is improving in mathematics.

Some parents are also concerned about their child's progress. A third of those who responded to Parent View, Ofsted's online parent survey said that they did not feel well informed about how well their children were doing.

Pupils are polite and respectful. They behave well. They enjoy debating with each other. They understand the importance of protecting other people's rights.

Pupils feel safe. They have a good understanding of how to improve their own mental and physical well-being. Pupils benefit from accessing mindfulness activities in the 'Sunshine Room' at breaktimes. Staff take good care of pupils. Leaders deal with incidents of bullying effectively.

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

Governors do not challenge leaders effectively enough about why attainment in reading is declining. Not all teachers are proficient in the teaching of reading, including phonics. This means that for those pupils who struggle with their reading at the end of Year 2, there is

insufficient support to help them to catch up. While teachers focus effectively on developing pupils' comprehension skills, some teachers do not support all pupils to develop fluency in reading because the curriculum is underdeveloped. This affects how well pupils can achieve across the wider curriculum. Outcomes in reading by the end of key stage 2 are not good enough.

Added to this, several older pupils said that they do not enjoy reading. The curriculum leader for reading does not ensure that teachers seize opportunities to share books with pupils for enjoyment. Many teachers also do not make sure that pupils' reading books are well matched to their level of ability. Some pupils are not challenged sufficiently. They do not develop their reading ability. For other pupils, these books are too hard. They become despondent and lose interest in reading.

Since September 2019, leaders have recognised this issue. They have begun to provide some phonics teaching sessions for a minority of pupils. A few trained teaching assistants support these pupils effectively. Pupils learn new sounds quickly in these sessions. However, they do not practise the sounds that they have learned when they return to class.

Conversely, in history and mathematics, the curriculum is well planned. Pupils achieve what leaders expect of them. In mathematics pupils' attainment is at the national average. Current pupils continue to achieve in line with curriculum expectations. This is because teachers help them to build on what they have learned before. When pupils have misconceptions or gaps in their knowledge, teachers provide effective support. When pupils are secure in one element of learning, teachers move them on to the next step. For example, pupils in Year 5 are confident in using formal written methods of calculations, such as column addition. Most pupils can also recall their multiplication tables easily. This helps them in Year 6 to find their own method of calculating accurate answers to real life problems.

Leaders adapt the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In mathematics lessons, for example, teachers ensure that pupils use practical equipment. This makes sure that all pupils can complete the kind of calculations expected for their age group. In history, pupils support each other's learning well. They demonstrate secure historical knowledge as they discuss and debate important changes that have happened in society over time.

Disadvantaged pupils have focused mathematics sessions with their teachers. In these sessions, teachers address any misconceptions that pupils have. As a result, teachers enable disadvantaged pupils to keep up with their peers in mathematics.

Teachers provide thought-provoking activities for pupils in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. These experiences help pupils to develop self-confidence. They respect other people's views and beliefs. Pupils are compassionate and caring. They are keen to help others in activities such as providing Christmas gifts for underprivileged children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff make sure that pupils are safe. Leaders have ensured that there are effective recording systems in place. Staff use these systems to share important information about vulnerable pupils. Leaders liaise with different agencies to provide support for pupils who need it. Pupils describe many things that they do to keep safe and well, for example by eating healthy foods or telling trusted adults about their worries. They understand rules and systems in school that are in place for their safety. They know to keep safe when they are online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not identified what is causing weaknesses in the teaching of reading. Pupils' attainment in reading has declined over time. Governors have accepted leaders' feedback about the falling standards without adequate challenge. Consequently, pupils' attainment in reading is not good enough. Governors need to ensure that leaders improve the quality of the reading curriculum and the leadership of reading across the school.
- Teachers do not ensure that those pupils who did not pass the phonics screening check at the end of key stage 1 catch up. Some pupils struggle to recall phonic knowledge. They do not read fluently. Leaders need to support staff in teaching the weakest readers how to develop strong phonic knowledge.
- The books that many pupils read in school are not at the right level for them. Some pupils struggle and they are reluctant to read. Other pupils are not challenged sufficiently. Pupils do not improve their reading ability as well as they should. Teachers need to ensure that the books that pupils choose to read at school help them to develop their reading ability.
- Teachers do not read to pupils regularly to share stories that they enjoy. Some pupils do not view reading as a pleasurable activity. Leaders need to develop a love of reading across the school.

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 school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the 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 Brackenwood Junior School to be good on 7–8 July 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 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	105013
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10087780
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	David Stanely
Headteacher	Conal Holmes
Website	www.brackenwoodjuniors.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 July 2015

Information about this school

- There have been no significant changes to the school since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils come from Brackenwood Infant School.

Information about this inspection

- I spoke with the headteacher, the special needs coordinator, a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and representatives from the local authority.
- I looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including the record of required checks carried out on school staff, staff training logs and case files. I met with the person responsible for safeguarding to discuss how the school keeps pupils safe.
- I observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. I also observed them as they moved around the school.
- I spoke to pupils about their experiences at school.
- I looked at the 43 responses to Ofsted's parental questionnaire, Parent View, and the 24 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. I spoke with parents as they dropped their children off at school.
- I focused closely on reading, mathematics and history. I talked to the leaders of these

subjects. I visited lessons. I looked at examples of pupils' work. I talked with teachers and pupils about what pupils were learning.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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