

Inspection of a good school: Thames Primary Academy

Severn Road, Blackpool, Lancashire FY4 1EE

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2023

Outcome

Thames Primary Academy continues to be a good school.

The headteacher of this school is Julie Allison. This school is part of Achievement Through Collaboration Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Jane Chambers, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Dave Hollings.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including children in the early years, arrive at school happy and ready to learn. Staff greet them with a warm smile each morning. Pupils know that adults are there to look after them and to help with any problems that they may have. Pupils said that this helps them to feel safe and happy in school.

The school has high aspirations for what pupils will learn and accomplish by the end of Year 6. Pupils strive to do well, and their achievement reflects their hard work. They behave well in lessons, and there is a calm atmosphere throughout the school. Pupils are keen to show respect for others, such as by holding doors open for adults and for their peers. At social times, pupils enjoy having fun with the equipment that has been sourced by the school council. They play happily together.

The school has organised a range of trips and visits from speakers to help pupils to better understand the wider world. Pupils are excited to learn more about the possibilities for their futures. Added to this, the school ensures that educational trips link closely to what pupils are learning. This enhances pupils' broader understanding of the subjects that they study.

Pupils are keen to take on extra responsibilities, and they wear their purple ties with pride. Pupils have the knowledge and attitudes necessary for their next steps.

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

Children in the provision for two-year-olds settle into school quickly. Staff swiftly get to know children's interests and encourage their learning through play. In the Nursery class,

staff place a sharp focus on children learning songs and rhymes. Highly skilled staff use every opportunity to develop children's vocabulary by supporting and motivating children to join in with enthusiasm. This helps children to be ready for learning to read and to count in the Reception Year.

The school has prioritised the teaching of early reading. Staff are well trained to deliver the phonics programme effectively. When children join the Reception Year, they build securely on their learning in the Nursery class by learning the sounds that they need to read straight away. Pupils practise their reading with books that are well matched to the sounds that they have learned. The school ensures that any pupils who struggle with reading get the extra support that they need to succeed. Most pupils read fluently and confidently by the time that they start key stage 2.

The school successfully promotes reading for enjoyment. For example, in the early years, children enjoy having the opportunity to vote for their favourite book at story time. Older pupils are eager to tell the inspector about their favourite characters and authors.

The school has designed a curriculum that meets the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers have a strong subject knowledge. The school ensures that teachers receive suitable training and appropriate resources, which enable them to deliver the curriculum well. Typically, teachers choose appropriate activities for pupils, which link closely to the knowledge that is identified in the curriculum. This includes for those pupils in the special educational needs (SEN) unit.

In the main, teachers explain new concepts with clarity and they use a range of strategies to check on pupils' understanding. The school has ensured that teachers are supported well to check that pupils have understood and remembered earlier learning. However, the school is still refining its approaches to assessment. From time to time, this hinders teachers in identifying and remedying gaps in pupils' knowledge swiftly enough.

Staff identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND in a timely manner. The school works with a broad range of external agencies to make sure that pupils get the support that they need. Teachers make appropriate adaptations to their teaching to ensure that pupils with SEND learn the curriculum successfully.

Pupils who attend the SEN unit benefit from a carefully designed curriculum that meets their needs. Highly skilled staff make judicious use of additional therapies so that these pupils attend regularly and are ready to learn. As a result, their rates of attendance and their achievement have improved.

Pupils consistently demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They behave well. There is a calm feeling around the school. Pupils talked with pride about the work that they do to support local charities. They understand the importance of learning about other faiths and cultures that may be different to their own. Pupils said that they felt that this knowledge had helped them to get along better with their peers. Pupils were adamant that they treat everyone fairly, irrespective of their background, culture or beliefs.

Staff feel appreciated and they enjoy working at the school. They know the school will provide the support that they need to carry out their roles effectively. Staff value the additional help and training that they receive through the trust. Governors and trustees use their experience and knowledge to support and challenge the school effectively.

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 areas, the school is still refining its approaches to assessment. This means that it is more difficult to check on pupils' understanding and to ascertain the gaps in pupils' prior knowledge. The school should ensure that, in these areas, teachers are suitably equipped to identify and address pupils' misconceptions.

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 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 second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2014.

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	138927
Local authority	Blackpool
Inspection number	10290217
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	437
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Dave Hollings
CEO	Jane Chambers
Headteacher	Julie Allison
Website	www.thames.atctrust.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 May 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thames Primary Academy is part of the Achievement Through Collaboration Trust.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- The school has provision for two-year-old children.
- The school has a special educational needs unit for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs. It has 16 places for pupils aged between seven to 11. There are currently 15 pupils attending the provision.
- The school does not use any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection that 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 her evaluation.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders and other members of staff.
- The inspector held a telephone conversation with the CEO and the vice-chair of the trust board. She met the chair of governors and held a telephone conversation with representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector observed pupils read to a trusted adult.
- The inspector observed pupil's behaviour during playtimes and while in lessons.
- 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, including the free-text comments. She considered the responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys. The inspector met with parents to gather their views and opinions about the school.

Inspection team

Sarah Barraclough, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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